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THE WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY REVIEW

Vol. VI, No. 3

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THE SOUTHERN LITERARY RENASCENCE

A Symposium

RANDALL STEWART

LOUISE COWAN

HARRY M. CAMPBELL

LOUIS RUBIN

ANDREW LYTLE

VERSE

DONALD DAVIE

DON GEIGER

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FICTION

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The Hole

ESSAY

DONALD PEARCE

Ibsen's Haunted House

GORDON RINGER

*The Present State of Pound
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A Symposium

THE SOUTHERN LITERARY RENAISSANCE

FOREWORD

The following papers were read at a meeting held on the morning of December 27, 1954 at the Statler Hotel in New York. The program was sponsored jointly by the Modern Language Association and the American Studies Association, and the general subject for discussion was "The Southern Literary Renaissance." The audience of some two hundred persons seemed unusually appreciative. The papers are printed here just as they were read at the meeting; it has not been thought necessary, or even desirable, to remove any traces of their "occasional" nature, the occasion itself having been such a happy one.

It was my good fortune to serve as chairman of this meeting. I am glad to have been instrumental in bringing together on one program such a group of participants. The occasion in retrospect seems already to have taken on a certain historical significance. Of the importance of the subject discussed, and the liveliness of the several treatments of it, there can be no question.

It will be evident to the reader that Mr. Lytle had advance copies of the other papers, having been asked to do a "summing-up." To those who participated in this program I am very grateful.

RANDALL STEWART

15 January 1955

The Fugitive Poets in Relation to the South

Recently, in a quite commendatory article on the Southern literary renaissance, the *London Times Literary Supplement* pointed out two important virtues of modern Southern literature: a sense of the concrete and a sense of the imagined whole. But the article continues, "The whole that is, in this case, imagined is not especially associated with the real. It is, for the most part, the

result of a work of refinement upon the crudest and rawest generalizations." The article makes specific reference to the group of poets that it calls the Agrarians as being manipulators of the past in an idealized image.

If this were not a frequently encountered comment, there would be no need of calling attention to the implicit judgment contained in it. But, although the quality of modern Southern writing has not gone unnoticed, the vision of life which it sets forth has been dismissed all too often as "unreal"—and, many times, as stemming from a desire to escape to a mythical past. Without attempting to settle the ancient question of what constitutes reality, we might examine the Fugitive poets in their relationship to the South in an attempt to ascertain whether, indeed, the Southern past has been for them merely a useful image.

Among the Southern writers, the Nashville poets who published the little magazine *The Fugitive* during the 1920's (all of them at the time were connected with Vanderbilt University) are frequently described as the most germinal and articulate thinkers ever to come out of the South. Unlike William Faulkner, for instance, who has maintained a deliberate silence on matters of theory, the men around John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren have fashioned a substructure of literary criticism, of social philosophy, and even of metaphysics on which an increasing number of younger writers are building. The formulation of these ideas occurred in the latter part of the twenties, just after the suspension of the magazine (in 1925) and a while before the publication of the symposium *I'll Take My Stand* launched the controversial Agrarian movement (in 1930). The Fugitives were a group of sixteen poets who had met more or less regularly every other Saturday night to read their poems and to discuss philosophical questions, for seven years before they decided to publish a little magazine. The Agrarians were twelve Southerners who contributed essays to a volume attacking industrialism and its metaphysical principle "Progress." The link between the two movements, the one purely literary, the other social and religious, was the four men whom I first mentioned—Ransom, Davidson, Tate, and Warren.

It was the work of these four that should be considered "Fugitive poetry," since they were, in Tate's words, the "final causes" of the movement. Despite their widely diverging poetic methods, their work shows common elements in both form and content which have been noted—though perhaps not sufficiently understood—by English and American critics. But there is a deeper kinship between them, one which generates the parallels of language, of irony, and of religious attitude: it lies in the element basic to their work and to a varying degree present in the work of their fellow-members. It is an element that I think we are justified in calling unique in American literature.

The chief quality which sets apart the poetry of the Fugitive group in modern letters is its embodiment of the fundamental beliefs of the society out of which it came.

T. S. Eliot has written that the poet cannot embody values in his work until he has experienced them communally. It is just such a communal sacrament that Mr. Eliot himself has been deprived of; and it is this quality in the work of the Fugitives, however major or minor their individual achievements may turn out to be, that binds them together into a genuine school of poets. And it is this quality in their work that the anonymous critic in the *Times Literary Supplement* has missed.

From our vantage point today, familiar as we are with what has been called the "Southern quality," it is easy to discern from the beginning in the poetry of Ransom, Tate, Davidson, and Warren an interior connection with their native land. But if we consider their critical statements, we are likely to think they simply "changed their minds" about the South, since they began writing with an attitude not unlike that of Stephen Dedalus toward his native country when he said, "Ireland is an old sow that eats her farrow"; and since they seemed, like him, determined to "fly by the nets" of family and country. The opening manifesto in the first issue of *The Fugitive*, for instance, is clear in its insistence upon a detachment from the mint julep and magnolia stream of literature. In an article written a short while later, Davidson further reinforced this stand by pointing out that theirs was "poetry with very little of the local scene in it."

The quarrel which the Fugitives initiated with Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry* magazine, exhibits even more strongly their concern that the poetry written by Southerners not be consciously Southern. As they rather insultingly wrote Miss Monroe, poetry to them was poetry, whether south or north of the Mason-Dixon Line, and they feared the pronouncements about the Southern "jewel-weighted" past made by her and other propagandizers for consciously local American poetry. If the South were to be depicted in literature, they wrote—and they were not sure it could be—it must be by something more than superficialities, by the "essences" and not the "accidents," as Tate later described it. Indeed, the Fall, 1923, *Fugitive* announced:

Whether the limitation be in the poets, or whether there is something fatally oppressive about these materials most readily obtainable from the past, we do not know. At any rate, we fear to have too much stress laid on a tradition that may be called a tradition only when looked at through the haze of a generous imagination.

At the end of 1925, when the magazine was suspended, Ransom, Davidson, Tate and Warren still considered themselves disengaged as writers from their society. But by 1927 these four were united in a searching critique of the elements that were changing and destroying the South which they had only a short time before intellectually renounced. An immediate cause of this striking reversal was the Dayton Trial in 1925 and the resulting misrepresentation of the South in Northern newspapers. As in all cultural crises, the turmoil issuing from the trial brought into the foreground ideas and attitudes that had been taken for granted in the past but that were now no longer generally accepted. An event which caused many intelligent Southerners to reject their native land propelled these four Fugitive poets into a careful study of Southern history. For the sake of honesty, they found themselves forced to defend in their native section characteristics which they knew to be inoffensive and even valuable. And finally, from an understanding of the deeply religious structure of life in the Tennessee hills, a structure which had its expression in Fundamentalism, grew the conviction which led these poets to their first overt

defense of the South. It was with these basic tendencies in their society that the four chief Fugitives were coupled in 1926, during the year after the trial; but the greater part of the work had already been done—in the medium of poetry, which, if a writer is immersed in it, allows little importance to the superficial and accidental in his surroundings. Yet in this year of transition they were still denying, in their published essays, any deep and pervasive connection between the poet and his native tradition.

In an essay, "Last Days of a Charming Lady," Tate wrote of the idleness of the Old South, of its lack of honesty about itself, and of its want of a real literary tradition. Davidson was just as positive that the Southerner was not free to make use of his immediate environment. In an article published in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, he asked the question, "What does it mean to be a Southerner and yet be a writer?" "The gallantries of the Lost Cause, the legends of Southern history—these he may admire, but they come to him mouthed over and cheapened . . . And in the new order his situation is equally baffling. He sees industrialism marching on, and can digest the victorious cries of civic boosters even less readily than the treacly lamentations of the old school." But, Davidson conceded, "the Southern character, properly realized, might display an affirmative zest and abandon now lacking in American art." Further, such aspects of the Southern character as Fundamentalism, although representing at its worst a "belligerent ignorance," also represented a "fierce clinging to poetic supernaturalism against the encroachments of cold logic; it stood for moral seriousness," a quality which the Southerner should be slow to scorn.

It was during 1926, too, that Tate and Davidson exchanged their first drafts of the poems "Ode to the Confederate Dead" and "The Tall Men," both concerned with the relationship of the modern Southerner to his past. Two years later Tate admitted to Davidson that the line "What shall we do who have knowledge carried to the heart?" was the germ of his poem:

That passage came out of God-knows-where (as most poems do); and after it was on paper it served to bring up a whole stream of associations and memories suppressed at least on the emotional plane, since my childhood. This quest of the past is

something we all share, but it is most acute in me. . . . Isolation [from the past] is ordinarily a pitfall at the bottom of which lies eccentricity (some of which I probably have) and sentimental extravagance of the worst kind.

The antidote, he believed, was a "sense of how things really *were* and . . . a resistance against things as they are. To lack the one, I believe, is to lack the other."

Tate's review of Ransom's volume *Two Gentlemen in Bonds* brought his conviction to a focus; seeing in Ransom's poetry the dramatization of the structures upon which the South had been based, Tate felt that he recognized the dominating principle in Fugitive poetry. A letter written to Davidson soon after this review openly and boldly stated this new allegiance:

And, by the way, I've attacked the South for the last time, except in so far as it may be necessary to point out that the chief defect the Old South had was that in it which produced, through whatever cause, the New South . . .

Davidson was quick to reply in kind:

You know I'm with you on the anti-New South stuff. . . . I feel so strongly on these points that I can hardly trust myself to write . . . But know this: though I trust my sense of humor and balance will save me from becoming a Bourbon in the extreme, I have fully decided that my America is here or nowhere.

Ransom was less fundamentally attached to the South than was Davidson and less antagonistic toward it than Tate had been. Sentimentally he had always valued his native land, with its code of gentility and its fine manners; but the implications of the Dayton Trial and the arrogant and ill-natured attacks on the South had involved him more deeply with his society, placing him in the somewhat surprising position of defending Fundamentalism. He recognized in the deification of science his old enemy abstractionism; and he knew himself obliged to think out his position defending the aesthetic and religious attitude. With the gradual realization of the magnitude of the question, he turned his thoughts to the foundation of society itself, his work finally resulting in the remarkable volume *God Without Thunder*. By early

spring, 1927, at the time of Tate's and Davidson's pledge, he had become alerted to the necessity for preserving the Southern tradition:

The Fugitives met last night [he wrote Tate]. The more I think about it, the more I am convinced of the excellence and the enduring vitality of our common cause. . . . Our fight is for survival; and it's got to be waged not so much against the Yankees as against the exponents of the New South. I see clearly that you are as unreconstructed and unmodernized as any of us, if not more so. We must think about this business and take some very long calculations ahead . . .

It would be easy to consider this apparently sudden metamorphosis as a mere change of mind, or perhaps the kind of conservative softening sometimes befalling men who have been courageous and radical in their youth. But these men were still young; and their thinking for the next ten years must in fairness be called the most daring and bold of their careers. A careful study of the published writings and the unpublished writing and the unpublished letters of the Fugitives reveals that what happened to them involved no real change in heart and character; instead it was a movement toward wholeness, toward accepting with their minds something they had known all along in their poetry.

In the beginning the Fugitives had the simple aim of developing a craft, but their dedication to that purpose led them ever farther into an exploration of their heritage. With effort they discovered their own realm of being, as any artist must; it was the land they knew—the South. In his poem "The Mediterranean," Tate has described the voyage that the poet must make in search of his tradition; using Aeneas as his correlative, Tate depicts the journey to a strange country, where the wanderer fulfills an illogical prophecy:

Where derelict you see through the low twilight
The green coast that you, thunder-tossed, would win,
Drop sail, and hastening to drink all night
Eat dish and bowl to take that sweet land in!

And, he continues, we have gone

Westward, westward till the barbarous brine
Whelms us to the tired land where tasseling corn,

Fat beans, grapes sweeter than muscadine
Rot on the vine: in that land were we born.

These men believed that it is the function of poetry to uncover the "real" world, that without poetry man is not capable of understanding his own life. The Fugitive poets made available to themselves and to the writers following them the basic structures upon which the South had stood. The image was, for them and for those who came after them, one of reality.

LOUISE COWAN

Notes on Religion in the Southern Renaissance

I should like to begin this brief study by quoting Mr. Robert Heilman in praise of Southern religion. Says Mr. Heilman: "... the Southerners are most aware that . . . the critical problem is not one of skeptically analyzing the religious impulse or of thinking as if religion did not exist for a mature individual and culture, but of distinguishing the real thing and the surrogates. . . . The invention of gods is a mark, not of a passion for unreality, but of a high sense of reality. . . ." I had always supposed that believers in orthodox religion—"the real thing"—did not "invent"—at least did not think they had invented—their God, and was just about ready to condemn Mr. Heilman as a confused Yankee (since he was born in Philadelphia) when I discovered that his position is almost exactly like that of a prominent and undeniably Southern writer—John Crowe Ransom in an intriguing book entitled *God Without Thunder*, with the subtitle "An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy." Ransom says that, beginning back with St. Paul and coming on down to modern times, religion has been distorted (with dire consequences) because St. Paul and many other early and late Christians were, and many now are, "scarcely informed of the sense and intention with which the myth-maker created the God."

The myth-maker, who was a man, or men in cooperation, created God instead of God creating man. This, then, is the first

great tenet upon which Ransom would base his restoration of vital religion to a world that is rapidly losing it. He would be completely unimpressed if you should confront him with the cogent arguments of Jacques Maritain and other outstanding orthodox religious philosophers, who say that to make man the creator of God is really atheism. Ransom would parry neatly by elaborating on his cleverly paradoxical purpose in calling his book "An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy." Let us follow his reasoning a little further. It doesn't seem to make much difference to Ransom whether the human myth-maker creates one inclusive God or a number of more restricted ones. He says, for example, that one of the most important tasks for those who are really interested in religion is, by developing Principles into Gods, to go beyond that philosophical part of the modern world which has been content to stop with Principles. Moderns, says Ransom, "should bring to full consciousness the metaphysical Principles to which they habitually run in the course of their sciences; and then they should set up the very best Gods they can to embody the Principles." "A Principle," he admits, "may grow a little dangerous in becoming a God. . . . But it is improved in most respects: it becomes vastly more effective as an expression." Ransom next very obligingly tells us how we may make Gods out of Principles. It turns out to be not too difficult if we set ourselves to it with a will: "A Principle insisted on, stuck to, meant, developed in detail, defined, professed, becomes a God."

And what kind of God—if we choose to limit ourselves to one—do we come out with by following this enlightened process? Ransom hopes we will creatively restore the old Hebraic God of wrath with his original thunder who was "awful, unpredictable, unappeasable," and who was "anthropomorphic but only with respect to the spirit." "Most Gods, by the way," Ransom adds, "are anthropomorphic, and the best Gods are anthropomorphic with this same reservation: with respect to the spirit." He offers this additional information apparently to guide us in selecting or creating our God or Gods.

But the main thing that Ransom wants us to remember always is, as he says, that we don't have to be fools in order to be religious—by which he means that we need not think our myth is

fact; we can and should recognize fully, as the original myth-makers (in Ransom's opinion) recognized, that the dogma of real religion is fiction, in the realm of *As If*. "I believe," he says,

that religious myths, including those of the Bible, are unhistorical and unscientific . . . but that their unhistorical and unscientific character is not their vice but their excellence, and that it certainly was their intent. . . . The realm through which metaphysics and religion would conduct us is the realm of *As If*. . . . Religion . . . encourages us with our pictures, our maps, and our notebooks, fictions though they offer.

In this picture-book approach to religion Ransom seems to be guilty of what Jacques Maritain would call "transcendental embezzlement . . . the error of conceiving the philosophy of *being* as a philosophy of *essence* or as a dialectic of essences. . . ." Such an error Maritain calls "thumbing through a picture-book instead of seeing that philosophy [of being] for what it really is . . . the philosophy of existence and of existential realism, the confrontation of the act of existing by an intelligence determined never to disown itself." What St. Thomas knows, Maritain adds, "is no picture-book, but is that very heaven and earth in which there are more things than are dreamt of in all the philosophies."

In other words, as is evident in Ransom's use of the very term *As If* to define the ontological status of religious dogma, he is an *As-Ifer*. Perhaps we should now examine this intriguing system more closely from the standpoint of the philosopher who gave it its name and preceded Ransom by some forty years in considering it a panacea for spiritual maladies—the German Hans Vaihinger in his book *The Philosophy of 'As If'* written in the 1890's. Says Vaihinger: "An idea whose theoretical untruth or incorrectness, and therewith its falsity, is admitted, is not for that reason practically valueless and useless; for such an idea in spite of its theoretical nullity may have great practical importance." Applied to religion, this philosophical approach Vaihinger finds well expressed by Forberg, whom he quotes thus with approval: "... it is not a duty to believe that there exists a moral world-government or a God as moral world-ruler; only our duty is simply to act *as if* we believed it." Since Vaihinger clearly implies that this attitude of

As if is the best one to take toward religion, it is curious that he definitely connects his "law of ideational shifts" with "the decline and break-up of religion (the shift being from dogma to hypothesis to fiction or As If as the religion declines more and more). Says Vaihinger:

At first all religion consists of general dogmas. . . . Then doubt appears and the idea becomes an hypothesis. As doubt grows stronger, there are some who reject the idea entirely, while others maintain it either as a public or a private fiction. This last condition is typical of every religion so far known when it has reached a certain age. It can be seen to great advantage in Greek religion, where the Greek folk-deities were at first general dogmas. . . . Subsequently they became fictions for the educated classes, who adhered tenaciously to the worship of God, or rather of the gods, although convinced that the ideas represented nothing real.

Of course Vaihinger was only expressing from the philosopher's standpoint what had already been widely circulated as the answer to the problem created by the conflict between science and religion in the nineteenth century—in Germany, for example, much of the higher criticism, in France the works of Renan and the substitution of poetry for religion by the Symbolists, in England Matthew Arnold's three books on religion, in which he calls religious dogma a beautiful poetic myth not true but useful in organizing our emotions. "The future of poetry is immense," said Arnold. "It had to be immense," says Allen Tate, "because, for men like Arnold everything else had failed." "It was the new religion," Tate adds, "that was destined to be lost more quickly than the old. Poetry was to have saved us; it not only hadn't saved us by the end of the fourth decade of this century; it had only continued to be poetry which was little read."

Tate might have added that in this century this same system of As If has been widely circulated not only in belles letters but also in philosophy, psychology, criticism (of both art and literature), and even theology (liberal of course). To mention only a few examples: Santayana's *Reason in Religion*, C. G. Jung's book entitled *Psychology and Religion*, I. A. Richards' "emotive" theory of poetry and religion, Mrs. Suzanne Langer's theory of "symbolic

transformation," and, still more recently, Malraux's *Voices of Silence*.

It was clear enough that this system of self-conscious illusion in religion had already strongly influenced the religious intelligentsia in the North even before the 1920's, but supposedly the South was the Bible Belt, as Mencken scornfully indicated. Is Ransom, then, an exception in this respect among Southern writers of this century? By no means. The As-Ifers may be in the minority, but, in varying types and in varying degrees of intensity, they have made their inroads on Southern orthodoxy. We may consider first a somewhat extreme case, the sentimental cynicism of James Branch Cabell, who ironically denies the existence of his dream world, Poictesme, at the very moment of proclaiming its ideal beauty. His wit on this subject covers very thinly his wisful yearning, like his own Jurgen, to recover beliefs forever lost. "O God," says Jurgen, "why could You not let me have faith? for You gave me no faith in anything, not even in nothingness. It was not fair."

Cabell may be said to occupy a half-way position between the As-Ifers and those Southern writers whose regret over their lack of a real faith seems rather frank and direct, like Thomas Wolfe ("O lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost, come back again" referring to religion as well as his other lost illusions) and like John Peale Bishop, in a few poems—for example, the one containing this passage:

But he is dead,
Christ is dead. And in a grave
Dark as a sightless skull he lies
And of his bones are charnels made.

Robert Penn Warren (as reported by R. W. Stallman) has said that in this passage of Bishop's "taste fails him flagrantly." Taken in conjunction with other parts of Warren's work, this comment is significant for our subject. Warren of course is referring in part to Bishop's failure to express his theme imaginatively in a sharp, original metaphor, but there is also an implication that Bishop should not have offended the naively faithful by so bluntly denying the historical truth of the Resurrection. Of course, Warren

implies, all good As-Ifers know that it was not historically true, but it has value as a poetic myth.

Warren, then, is an As-Ifer but apparently not a happy one. There are a number of passages in his critical work like the following, taken from his essay entitled "Literature as a Symptom" in *Who Owns America?*: He speaks with regret of "the modern writer who remembers the happy dead [i.e., writers who lived in happier ages than this] just at the uncomfortable moment when he himself gets ready to sit down at his work-table to fight his own battles in the confusion of their detail." Just what these battles are he explains in another essay (in *American Review*, II, 485-485): "Faulkner and a considerable group of younger Southern writers," says Warren,

are interested in putting . . . the question about the destiny of certain obscure individuals, their characters, so that the question will remain alive. Perhaps the questions, or some of them, are unanswerable. But that sort of passionate, yet disinterested and patient, contemplation is . . . the business of an art, even the art of the novelist. It is a contemplation rooted in the poetic attitude.

In his latest novel, *World Enough and Time*, Warren still finds these questions unanswerable and contents himself with comments as author (not dramatized in the story) that vacillate at frequent intervals throughout the book between attributing the tragedy of Jeremiah and Rachel to their own willful errors and then (exactly in reverse fashion) attributing it to a deterministic fate symbolized by the land. One can only conclude that in this "passionate contemplation rooted in the poetic attitude" Warren is still "fighting his own battles in the confusion of their detail." In other words he is, in effect, an agonizing As-Ifer rather than a jaunty, self-assured one like Ransom and his followers.

Faulkner, too, belongs in the agonizing group, who might be called stoical humanists; he emphasizes traditional morality, but he is nonetheless, so far as religious dogma is concerned, an As-Ifer. In 1951 Mr. Foster and I in our book on Faulkner said this about his attitude toward religion: "When Faulkner uses religious, even theistic, terms or symbols, he usually seems to be doing so, like

Thomas Hardy, without any actual religious faith but as an emotional, poetic (and usually a very powerful) method of deploring man's fate, as if at times it were more endurable to posit a malevolent than an indifferent cosmic force or forces—the 'Cosmic Joker,' the [cosmic] 'Player,' and so on." Surely, some will say, this opinion written in 1951 should be changed in view of the recent *A Fable*, which the publisher's blurb assures us is Faulkner's masterpiece and is written in a devoutly religious spirit. But let us examine the allegory a little. The Old Commander is supposed to represent God the Father, and his illegitimate son the Corporal, who leads the mutiny with his twelve assistants, represents Christ. The Commander has seduced a perfectly happy and virtuous married woman, who has become the mother of the Corporal. This would appear to be a rather strange variation on the Virgin Birth, even granting the allegorist a liberal imagination. But God the Father is not only an adulterer, he is a warmonger; he is one of the big generals (another one is a German) who get together after the mutiny to keep the war going on for their ends. And the big generals succeed; the war starts up again, and the first barrage strikes the grave of the Corporal, who has been executed between two thieves; when his sisters after the barrage return to the place of burial, they find a few fragments of the coffin but no body even after careful digging. The Resurrection of course? Apparently not so, for the body has only been moved within one of the huge piles of dirt that have been dug up by the artillery shells and forced into the neighboring field. The owner of this field discovers the body while plowing and later digs it up and sells it to some soldiers sent in search of a decaying corpse to be buried as the Unknown Soldier. The Resurrection, too, turns out to be ironical, and where is Faulkner religiously? Still upholding traditional morality and believing that man (the race) will "prevail," but, like Kafka, ironical, even sardonic, about the ultimate cosmic reality.

Of course there are prominent Southern writers for whom religious dogma has been more than a fiction, whose religious faith has been strong and deep—Donald Davidson, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Andrew Lytle, Herbert Agar, Caroline Gordon, Allen Tate, and others—but even these have felt the effects of modernism.

As Allen Tate has said recently (I quote from Mr. Rubin's essay in *Southern Renaissance*): "As I look back upon my own verse, written over more than twenty-five years, I see plainly that its main theme is man suffering from unbelief; and I cannot for a moment suppose that this man is some other than myself." Besides his poetry, some of Tate's prose reveals this struggle which finally ended in his becoming a Roman Catholic. A good example is his essay on religion in *I'll Take My Stand* (1930). Here he says again and again, apparently with considerable self-consciousness, that defending religion is by no means the same as possessing it. His own dissatisfaction with Protestantism makes him, somewhat unfairly, attribute to it much of the tragedy of the South both before and after the Civil War. The South, he says, "never created a fitting religion," but "tried to encompass its destiny within the terms of Protestantism, in origin, a nonagrarian and trading religion; hardly a religion at all, but a result of secular ambition. . . . And this is why the South separated from the North too late, and so lost its cause." And yet this Protestant apparently well on his way to becoming a Catholic says this at the beginning of his essay: "So I begin an essay on 'religion' with almost no humility at all; that is to say, I begin it in a spirit of irreligion. . . . And this is a matter of deep regret; for one will have to think for oneself, a responsibility intolerable to the religious mind, whose business is to prepare the mysteries for others. This I cannot pretend to do." In his recent volume of essays, *The Forlorn Demon*, written since he became a Catholic, Tate seems to have turned, perhaps too much, to "preparing the mysteries for others," but even the majority of non-religious readers can agree with his blasting the sophisticated thinness of As-Ifism (though he never uses the term *As If*). "The obscurity of Poe's poetic diction," says Tate,

is rather vagueness than the obscurity of complexity. . . . But it is never the idolatrous dissolution of language from the grammar of a possible world, which results from the belief that language itself can be reality, or by incantation can create a reality: a superstition that comes down in French from Lautrémont, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé to the Surrealists, and in English to Hart Crane, Wallace Stevens, and Dylan Thomas. . . .

One wonders, in conclusion, whether loyalty to some of his Southern friends keeps Tate from including them in this group. The As-Ifers whom we have discussed (and there are a number of others), in "inventing" or "legislating into being" a God or Gods or some substitute for Him or Them, would certainly seem to be guilty of trying to make language reality or of trying by language to create a kind of as-if reality of the spirit. Do they really believe? It is the intellectually fashionable thing now to say that such an attitude indicates both belief and unbelief at the same time in the same way—perhaps like Wallace Stevens' "Profundum, physical thunder, dimensions in which we believe without belief, beyond belief." Or perhaps like the prominent German existentialist Jaspers, who says that we must believe in polarities (opposites) as the condition of human existence; that is, we accept both faith and unfaith, Christianity and atheism, simply because reality itself is contradictory. Says Jaspers: "... Being and Nothingness are inseparable, each containing the other, yet each violently repelling the other..." I am tempted to say that the As-Ifers are more like another prominent German existentialist, Heidegger, who says. "Does Nothing exist only because the Not, i.e., negation, exists? Or is it the other way about? Does negation and the Not exist only because Nothing exists? Where shall we seek Nothing? ... Only in the clear night of dread's Nothingness is what-is as such revealed in all its original overtiness: that it 'is' and is not Nothing." Then, inventing a verb *to nothing*, Heidegger declares that "the Nothing nothings." I confess that all this seems to me like plain, non-existential nothing. I can't see how something can both be and not be at the same time in the same way, just as I can't see how the As-Ifers can derive any spiritual benefit from a God or Gods whom they have "invented" or "legislated into being." But I am not a symbolic logician, and some of the symbolic logicians are eloquently contending that the age-old classical logic, one of whose fundamental principles has always been the law of contradiction, will soon be superseded by a newer, more inclusive logic in which we will no longer have to say that A is *not* not-A but we can triumphantly assert that A is not-A I hope to retire before this new system gets complete control.

HARRY MODEAN CAMPBELL

A Looking Two Ways

One of the favorite pastimes of Southern critics during the period between the inauguration of Rutherford B. Hayes in 1877 and that of Warren G. Harding in 1921 was to make confident and proud predictions that the Southern states were on the verge of becoming a literary garden. C. Alphonso Smith, William Peterfield Trent, Walter Hines Page, John Spencer Bassett all expected the New South to burst into literary bloom at any moment. "An impartial study of the present industrial and economic conditions of the South, with the rich promise that they unfold, leads to the conclusion that greater literary triumphs are yet in store," C. Alphonso Smith predicted in 1898. He cited lines from a poem by Maurice Thompson and compared them with lines from Shakespeare to prove his point. "It is no idle fancy that detects a kindred spirit in Mr. Thompson's lines and those of the great Elizabethan," he declared. "Do they not both breathe the spirit of a new age?"

These are the lines he quoted from Maurice Thompson:

The South whose gaze is cast
No more upon the past,
But whose bright eyes the skies of promise sweep,
Whose feet in paths of progress swiftly leap,
And whose fresh thoughts like cheerful rivers run
Through odorous ways to meet the morning sun.

The phrase "odorous ways" interests me in particular. Thompson's connotations seem much more vivid than his denotations. He did not choose "scented ways" or "fragrant ways" or "perfumed ways," though I am sure he meant all these. He chose "odorous" for his adjective, which enjoys connotations that none of the others do.

I am not trying to be facetious. The point is that the Southern literary renaissance did come, all right, and in a profusion such as the New South critics never in their most optimistic dreams anticipated. But when it came, it came in a far different form, and with far different motivation and inspiration, from what had been expected. So much so that many of these New South critics who were still alive during the 1920s not only had difficulty in recogniz-

ing the Southern literary renaissance going on all around them, but indeed tended to slight most of the works that it was producing.

To return to Thompson's lines, I wonder whether his choice of the word "odorous," with all its two-edged connotations, was entirely fortuitous? I wonder whether the literary men of the New South, who were always so confidently predicting the inevitable emergence of Southern culture as a direct product of Southern industrialism, did not sometimes have certain doubts? Here, for example, is a quotation, somewhat out of context, from an essay by Henry N. Snyder, published in John Spencer Bassett's *South Atlantic Quarterly*. Snyder is writing about the promising developments in Southern letters at the turn of the century:

At present the hum of machinery, the ceaseless rattle of spindle and loom, furnishes the rather loud music of our industrial and commercial reconstruction,—so loud, indeed, that we are in danger of hearing little else. This makes it especially important that we should halt now and then and take notice of that change in Southern literary thought that we have been discussing.

The tone is assured, and satisfactorily progressive and forward-looking, and yet one imagines he can catch a certain note of apprehension there, a moment of doubt about the quality of the music, a certain fear perhaps that the ways toward the morning sun may prove a trifle odorous and even odoriferous for the man of letters, stout ally though Dr. Snyder was of John Spencer Bassett, Walter Hines Page, and the New South.

During this period there was not only hope for better things, there was what seemed to be the proof of good things already present. Time and time again we find the New South critic hailing his literary contemporaries as harbringers and products both, of the cultural beneficences of the New South. Yet except for Miss Ellen Glasgow, and Joel Chandler Harris, the writers who seemed to Alphonso Smith, Henry Snyder, and their contemporaries to be such conclusive proof of the South's literary resurgence were writers whom nowadays we are inclined to dismiss as relatively unimportant, mostly local color artists. They were writers such as Irvin S. Cobb, James Lane Allen, Mary Noailles Murfree, Mary

Johnston, George Washington Cable, Mrs. Burton Harrison, John Fox, Jr., Grace King, Samuel Minturn Peck, Owen Wister, Madison Cawein, Cale Young Rice, and others like them. When the real renaissance in Southern literature did come, as it did after the first world war, most of the writers who created it were new names. Ellen Glasgow continued her work, to be sure, and yet with a difference. From General Battle in *The Voice Of The People* to old General Archbald of *The Sheltered Life* is a long distance, and an immense shift in the author's attitude toward essentially similar phenomena. In Ellen Glasgow's later work there was not nearly so much of the bold New South, not nearly so much faith in the new industrial progress as panacea for all the South's ills. There was also James Branch Cabell, with his finely cut irony and gentility, and others like William Faulkner, Stark Young, Allen Tate, Thomas Wolfe, John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Robert Penn Warren, Katherine Anne Porter, and Erskine Caldwell. And of these writers of the modern South, the significant theme about their stories and poems and essays seemed to be not the happy anticipation of the benefits being conferred by the New South and the Rockefeller Foundation's campaign against hookworm, but instead a most unprogressive lament for the passing of Southern life as it used to be, before the tractor and the steel mill came.

This is the whole theme of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha saga, for example. The poor-white Snopes have come up, and the once proud Compsons and Sartorises are either bloodless and impotent or entirely extinct, and the change is not for the better. In *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin Compson's father looks back upon the Yoknapatawphans of an earlier day, compares them with his own twentieth-century contemporaries, and finds the Sutpens, Compsons, De Spains and Sartorises of the 1860s "people too as we are, and victims too as we are, but victims of a different circumstance, simpler and therefore, integer for integer, larger, more heroic and the figures therefore more heroic too, not dwarfed and involved but distinct, uncomplex who had the gift of loving once or dying once instead of being diffused and scattered creatures drawn blindly limb from limb from a grab bag and assembled,

author and victim too of a thousand homicides and a thousand copulations and divorcements."

In Thomas Wolfe's novels one constantly encounters passages like that in *Of Time And The River*, in which young Eugene Gant sits in a French restaurant and hears the sound of footsteps, and is reminded of another sound, "a sudden living and intolerable memory, instant and familiar as all this life around him, of a life that he had lost, and that could never die."

It was the life of twenty years ago in the quiet, leafy streets and little towns of lost America—of an America that had been lost beneath the savage roar of its machinery, the brutal stupefaction of its days, the huge disease of its furious, ever-quickening and incurable unrest, its flood-tide horror of gray, driven faces, stolid eyes, starved, brutal nerves, and dull, dead flesh.

The memory of the lost America—the America of twenty years ago, of quiet streets, the time-enchanted spell and magic of full June, the solid, lonely, liquid shuffle of men in shirt-sleeves coming home, the leafy fragrance of the cooling turnip-greens, and screens that slammed, and sudden silence—had long since died, had been drowned beneath the brutal flood-tide, the fierce stupefaction of that roaring surge and mechanic life which had succeeded it.

To turn to poetry, there is that long poem of Donald Davidson's, *The Tall Men*, whose theme—indeed, the theme of all of Donald Davidson's beautiful poetry—is the incongruity of the modern man and his heroic past. From one section, "Disease of Modern Man," I quote this satiric sequence:

This is Rupert of the House
Of Rupert, famed in history,
Pondering on his income tax,
Deducting genealogy.
Great-grandfathers from a loophole
Potted Choctaws in the thicket;
Rupert, menaced by the Reds,
Scratches the Democratic ticket.
Rupert's mother, D.A.R.;
Rupert's father, U.C.V.;
Rupert, mounting in his car,
Zooms up to God in Rotary.
Grandma Rupert had ten children;

Rupert's father begot five.
 All of Rupert's stocks and bonds
 Are strained to keep one son alive.

Or for another example, John Ransom's fine poem, "Antique Harvesters," with its angry retort of the young Southerners when counselled to abandon the traditional ways of the South for more progressive and promising fames:

Forsake the Proud Lady, of the heart of fire,
 The look of snow, to the praise of a dwindling choir,
 Sons of degenerate specters that were men?
 The sons of the fathers shall keep her, worthy of
 What these have done in love.

Ransom as usual is oblique and figurative where Davidson is direct and topical, yet both these modern Southern poets are agreed, no less than Wolfe and Faulkner are in their own vastly different techniques agreed, that their country is changing, that the South was undergoing a transformation, and that the change was by no means completely a gain. The motif of change, of being caught up in transition, underlies the work of all the modern Southern writers. It takes the form in most instances of a heightened awareness of the nature of mortal time, and the deadly transience of life.

In art all action exists in time, of course, but in the Southern stories and poems of the past several decades time becomes not merely a framework to permit the telling of a tale; it becomes a part of the story itself, a living, palpable presence. In Eudora Welty's master work, the narrative about time entitled *The Golden Apples*, time is quasi-humorously portrayed in the form of a metronome ticking away relentlessly. A child hears it, and fears it. "Reckon it's going to blow up in the night?" he asks his colored nurse. "All by itself, of its own accord," he thinks, "it might let fly its little door and start up." "I 'spec' it will, Loch, if you wants it to," his nurse replies. Time will wreck the lives and loves of the inhabitants of Morgana, Mississippi, even as it creates art, and most of them desperately if unconsciously strive to keep time out of mind. Indeed, throughout *The Golden Apples* the girl Virgie Rainey frantically keeps trying to slam shut the doors of her consciousness

against the awful knowledge of time, but at the end, in the rain, it is there nonetheless:

October rain on Mississippi fields. The rain of fall, maybe on the whole South, for all she knew on the everywhere. She stared into its magnitude . . .

She smiled once, seeing before her, screenlike, the hideous and delectable face Mr. King McLain had made at the funeral, and when they all knew he was next—even he. Then she and the old beggar woman, the old black thief, were there alone and together in the shelter of the big public tree, listening to the magical percussion, the world beating in their ears. They heard through falling rain the running of the horse and bear, the stroke of the leopard, the dragon's crusty slither, and the glimmer and the trumpet of the swan.

Thus, far from hailing the advent of modernity and reveling in the progress of the twentieth century, most of the writers who created the Southern literary renaissance wove into their stories and poems the theme of loss, of poignant lament for the passing of the old and the onset of the new. Some, like Davidson and his fellow contributors to *I'll Take My Stand*, openly opposed the New South. "Uppermost in our minds," Davidson wrote in describing the writing of that agrarian symposium and the time in which it was being written, "was our feeling of intense disgust with the spiritual disorder of modern life—its destruction of human integrity and its lack of purpose; and with this, we had a decided sense of impending fatality." Others, like Thomas Wolfe, could accept neither the old nor the new, and found themselves caught squarely between them, pulled two ways in a tug of war between upbringing and opportunity, knowledge and theory, tradition and progress. Wolfe most of all is so caught up in change, so terrified by the overweening sense of transience, that his work consists largely of the attempt to remember who he was and is, where he has been, to hold on to his own swift-flying mortality.

Old haunt-eyed faces glimmered in his memory. He thought of Swain's cow, St. Louis, death, himself in the cradle. He was the haunter of himself, trying for a moment to recover what he had been part of. He did not understand change, he did not understand growth. He stared at his framed baby picture in the

parlor, and turned away sick with fear and the effort to touch, retain, grasp himself for only a moment.

Why should these Southern writers whose work made so definite an impression on the national literary scene during the 1920's and thereafter be so conscious of change? It is always somewhat dangerous to attribute causation to artistic and spiritual phenomena, and yet there is, I think, an inescapable tie-in here between the history of the South in the twentieth century and the work of its writers during the decades that followed the First World War. Wolfe, Faulkner, Tate, Davidson, Warren, Ransom and the others all grew up during the period from 1900 to 1920, and it was during this period most of all that the New South, with its philosophy of eager adoption of Northern business ways and progress for farm and factory, began to make its real impact on the life of the Southern states. Though it was in the late 1870's and the 1880's that Henry W. Grady and his followers had championed the New South, there had been quite a distance for industrialism to travel, and it was not until the twentieth century that its presence really began to change the face of Southern life.* In the new century, however, the changes began to be felt, as the new ways now made severe inroads in the Southern life both in city and village. With the first world war, the economic transformation leaped into high gear. The South entered the union again, and with it came the Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and the increasing importance of business over agriculture. "In those years," Donald Davidson has written, "industrial commercialism was rampant. In no section were its activities more blatant than in the South, where old and historic communities were crawling on their bellies to persuade some petty manufacturer of pants or socks to take up his tax-exempt residence in their midst. This industrial invasion was the more disturbing because it was proceeding with an entire lack of consideration for its results on Southern life. The rural population, which included at least two-thirds of the total population, was

*Cf. C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of The New South*, Baton Rouge, 1951, p. 139; and Francis Butler Simkins, *The South Old and New*, New York, 1949, pp. 246-47.

being allowed to drift into poverty and was being viewed with social disdain. Southern opinion, so far as it was articulate, paid little serious attention to such matters. . . . The business interests were taking full advantage of the general dallying with superficial issues."

One of the most vivid scenes in the uneven second novel of Thomas Wolfe's, *Of Time and the River*, takes place in the smoking compartment of a Northbound Pullman car as a group of Altamont businessmen, circa 1920, discussed the economic future of the booming mountain town. Willingly, ignorantly, and proudly they boast of how business was transforming Altamont from a sleepy little village to the money-mad, property-mad, tourist-mad city it became during the 1920's. In pompous tones they discuss the forthcoming presidential election, until one of them, a realist, says bluntly what is on all their minds, but which they will not for a minute admit: "We're tired of hearin' bunk that doesn't pay and we want to hear some bunk that does—and we're goin' to vote for the crook that gives it to us. . . . Do you know what we want?—what we're looking for? . . . We want a piece of the breast with lots of gravy—an' the boy who promises us the most is the one we're for!"

Wolfe was there remembering, and if we are to judge from his *Letters To His Mother* remembering accurately; for the letters written during the 1920's are filled with mingled horror at what was happening to his home town, and fascination with the phenomenon of change. At the bottom of all Wolfe's novels lies that acute consciousness of transience, of the swift departure of the old. The spirit of the time might have been Progress, but for Wolfe and his fellow writers, Progress meant loss, change, regret.

This feeling of change that runs through their work—and Wolfe was only the more autobiographical, not the less typical—was not something abstract and idealized. Rather, the heightened awareness of time and mortality came about because of a very real and tangible life of change and transience going on all around them. Their own families, their communities, their land and stores and churches and friends and acquaintances, were all undergoing it. Around them on the streets of the towns and villages during their early

years had been old men, Confederate veterans, and the constant talk of a lost war and a bitter Reconstruction. Their fathers and grandfathers had fought in a war and had been beaten. Only several decades previous, their country had been a conquered, occupied land. Now they saw themselves and their country "entering the Union again," emulating the ways of the section that had beaten them. And yet they were both *in* and *outside* of the modern, twentieth century American currents. To quote Wolfe again,

They had come out . . . into a kind of sunlight of another century. They had come out upon the road again. The road was being paved. More people came now. They cut a pathway to the door again. Some of the weeds were clear. Another house was built. They heard wheels coming and the world was *in*, yet they were not yet wholly of that world.

There again we have that motif of change—the old and the new, juxtaposed against each other. Allen Tate has remarked practically the same thing: "After the [first world] war the South again knew the world, but it had a memory of another war; with us, entering the world once more meant not only the obliteration of the past but a heightened consciousness of it; so that we had, at any rate in Nashville, a double focus, a looking two ways, which gave a special dimension to the writing of our school—not necessarily a superior quality—which American writing as whole seemed to lack." And again, "With the war of 1914-1918, the South reentered the world—but gave a backward glance as it stepped over the border: that backward glance gave us the Southern renaissance, a literature conscious of the past in the present."

"A looking two ways." Here if anything is the phrase that characterizes the Southern literary renaissance of the twentieth century's third decade and after. It is a literature in which the double image of past and present was present in the artistic vision of the poets and novelists who created the renaissance, and who could thus observe the teeming life going on all around them with a depth, a perspective, that could permit its transformation into art. They were of it and yet outside of it, and they could give that life a clear, heroic artistic existence in time and place, even while faithfully understanding its dimensions as only the participant can. The

literature of the modern South is a three-dimensional literature, because it has depth as well as length and breadth—and this because those who created it were able to see the life of man in past and present, then and now, at the same time, rather than merely depict the discordant image of modern man in confused alarums at night. There was present for their eyes to see and minds to comprehend an image, the image of history—present time against the backdrop of all that had happened. "The past is never dead," says Gavin Stevens. "It's not even past."

Thus as Thomas Sutpen rides up to the inn in Jefferson for the first time, silent, secretive, looming large, we see in *Absalom, Absalom!* not merely a horseman, but the image of a man on horseback. We can see the rider against the backdrop of the past and the future as well. And seeing him thus, we can know what he means, and we can find in his story meaning for then and now. For that is the function of myth, and it is mythmaking that the Southern writers of our time have done, as artists will always do when the accident of history can give to their artistic vision the perspective to recognize essential things about the time and place of man.

LOUIS D. RUBIN, JR.

A Summing Up

The pleasant occasion for listening to these excellent papers gave me for a moment a feeling of nostalgia. I felt as if the ghost of my youth was brought forth with those friends and contemporaries to hear their funeral orations, for surely we are given to think that when definition is reached, it is the past fixed and crystallized. And so the phrase *Southern Renaissance* brought me up sharp against the matter of time, but not quite in Mr. Rubin's sense of it. I quickly take comfort in the belief that ghosts don't speak except in literature and psychiatry. The men and women composing this renaissance, except of course Wolfe, are very much alive. They are still creating. Most of them are writing criticism. Indeed, this flux of critical display seems to me the only evidence of

mortality. I cannot help but feel it is the last stand of the creative mind. Criticism can never take the place of the poet making.

It is largely the poet as poet, and this includes fiction, which concerns Mrs. Cowan and Mr. Rubin. Mr. Campbell's notes have to do, of course, with the source of belief. Mrs. Cowan was particular to emphasize the Fugitives' apprenticeship always to literature. Mr. Rubin connected all those writing by a sense of time, of mutability, and in Mr. Tate's words "a looking two ways," but his concern was with them, also, as writers first and always. Mrs. Cowan has pointed out that the Fugitives were the only articulate school. I would like to start off with them, but first I want to say that the renaissance didn't stop with one generation of writers. The work and counsel of the Nashville group alone has influenced many young people. There's Peter Taylor and Randall Jarrell and those who published in the *Southern Review*. Many fell by the way but Miss Welty would be worth this magazine's short life. Nor did the influence limit itself to the South. Robert Lowell came to Tennessee with other young men and set up a tent in Mr. Tate's yard at Benfoly and later went to L.S.U. When Mr. Ransom left Vanderbilt, students followed him to Kenyon College. The Renaissance has been going for thirty years with little sign of diminishment.

To paraphrase Mrs. Cowan: The Fugitives' literary quality, and this she feels is what sets them apart in modern American letters, is their embodiment of the basic values of their society. I would like to clarify this a little further, even to the extent of differing with her somewhat on the agrarian phase, which to her is primarily a social and religious movement. And this will be the way I can bring Mr. Campbell in. First I must make a short historic diversion. When the Fugitives first met, it was at a moment of release of energy following the first world war. This war not only brought the South again into the Union; it brought the whole country into a fresh view of Europe. The Revolution freed us politically; the world war economically. Our isolation from Europe was forever gone. Eliot and Pound, Hemingway and Fitzgerald (even Frost lived in England a while), almost every writer of worth and many that weren't found themselves changed by a historic circumstance. Out of a common experience at a time of

crisis and its aftermath, a common literary brotherhood which seemed to belong to the age was for a while uppermost in the mind of all men of letters. Nobody was asked where he came from. Robert Graves, I recollect, invited Mr. Ransom to go to Cairo with him. Miss Gottschalk went instead. The South's isolation had been two-fold, both at home and abroad. The Fugitives were rediscovering the entire literary inheritance out of fresh eyes. It seemed a part of this new world. To remain in it they felt they had to flee the local scene. As honest craftsmen they were merely fleeing the spurious, sentimentalized version of it, although they didn't see this at the time.

Crises don't last, but they never leave things quite as they were. The country, like the Bundrens in *As I Lay Dying*, after the crisis was over, found itself back in the old involvement, the confusion of the domestic scene. The Southerners were brought sharp up against a modern version of the old schism, differing concepts of belief about God and the state. As generally happens, some kind of overt action joins the issue. This was the Dayton trial. The issue, to put it into Mr. Ransom's phrase, was between the old god and the new, the supernatural and the natural, the irreducible mystery and matter conquered and controlled by science. Nobody with a sense of history would deny the state's right to determine its belief and the education of its young. Nor did anybody at Dayton. The foreign counsel merely assumed that its belief in science had triumphed and that the Tennesseans were rebellious.

It was reserved not for lawyers but literary men to interpret this new version of civil strife. The scattered Fugitives began to see that military defeat does not always decide issues (how aware of this are we today); that ideas are not defeated; men are. This led them to examine their cultural inheritance more narrowly; nor did they hesitate to go into it from all sides. Others joined them, notably the historian Frank Owsley. This made it a genuine renaissance, not merely a private matter: for their concern was with what was rotten in Denmark. In the first symposium every man was free to write without editorial restriction. The unanimity of a common attitude seemed more than an accident. All discovered that the total man involves a coherent unity of self in terms of

the forms of social behavior and belief, and they proposed to say why man was no longer able to be the total man. The looking two ways became the common post of observation. The agrarians looked back to the past, not out of nostalgia, as they were so easily accused, but to enrich their knowledge so that they could act out of a greater clarity and understanding. For the literary man to act is to write. They were conscious of time, certainly, but their action concerned itself with the structure of society, the contradictory assumptions as to its being. The structure is in its institutions. The institution is defined by conventions. Belief, the life of the state, functions through its conventions. When these are out of joint, the state is in peril. Indeed Faulkner's technical convention is the fragmentation of the social conventions.

The Fugitives' flight from the Bourbons and the jewel-weighted past, the controversy with Miss Monroe on local poetry, was merely the initial phase, an intuitive resistance to the spurious and the partial. The agrarian period was a conscious and critical attack, out of a large knowledge, upon the New South men as men traduced by the enemy. This was called Industrialism, but it was a poor name. Mr. Tate and Mr. Warren and I wanted to name *I'll Take My Stand, Tracts Against Communism*. We were voted down. Spindles do not make poems; they make cloth as poets make poetry. This does not mean that the spindler and the poet do not have common commitments and needs. The poet wears cloth even if the spindler doesn't read poems. And the poet can be concerned that he pays too much for his cloth and receives too little for his poetry. And especially can he be concerned that a debased poetry receives precedence over the genuine. This awareness of the social situation does not impair the writing of poetry. It may bring the poet to a fuller sense of reality. And this, I think, is what happened after the Dayton trial.

To ask for a local poetry, as Miss Monroe and the New South men did, was to ask for a poetry of the convention itself. Or the poetry of the artifact. This will always make a false literature, because it ignores the function of convention. It accounts even now for a mistaken sense of what regional literature is. Any literature is regional or local in the sense that it is somewhere, at some time,

acting out of some belief and aesthetic. No action exists in a vacuum. But to ask for a local poem or novel with the emphasis on the local was to ask for the Procrustean bed. Something is always cut or stretched beyond its organic proportions, which means that experience is distorted beyond any recognition of it. Propaganda as literature is an extreme example of this, aside from the fact that it asks literature to obey a discipline not its own. And this corrupts. If Mr. Alphonso Smith's comparison of Mr. Thompson's lines to those of the great Elizabethans is not a corruption of taste, it is certainly one of judgment. But local color is a more familiar example. Its point of view is that of the foreigner viewing the local scene, and the foreigner is first conscious of the convention as such, rather than what it conveys. Any outlander may try to write local color, but the author is usually writing about his own society. He is merely viewing it as an outsider, that is from a superior attitude: which is to say that he is patronizing it. This violates the integrity of sympathy which the author must bring to his fictive creations. Like a stranger, he is acutely aware of speech, manners and dress, out of proportion to the action. He cannot see his people as human beings like all human beings speaking and acting as they are accustomed to, because he does not work from within. He does not understand the function of the convention. For example, he hears "block and tickle" for the more usual "block and tackle," and he thinks how quaint or how odd. He does not think of it as a need in the action, so falsifies the need and therefore the action. Local color can be outside another way. It can romanticize or sentimentalize the convention. This also deprives the action of its full body. The subject is denied the balanced relationship of itself to its environment. This is the literary heresy of treating the convention as ornament instead of form.

The New South men were given to this in a peculiar way. Industrialism was introducing trade practices which could possibly become a convention, but they saw these practices not as becoming but as become and then proceeded to accept them as the subject itself. Mr. Rubin's quotations were very revealing as to this. They thus magnified the procedure of the local colorist. They lost the sense that a subject will always be some part of the universal

predicament of man trapped in the complexities of experience, as the convention will always be the restraining form. The Fugitives were never so confused, nor were the best of the other Southern writers. These authors all had to face through conflict the two ways of viewing man in his given society. This complicated the formal handling of their subject matter. The degree of apprehension finds its extremes between Wolfe and the Nashville group. Wolfe never freed his work from a narcissistic preoccupation with his ego. He did not withdraw to a post of observation sufficiently objective from which his private revery could be checked against the discrete objects of the world. The obscurity of his views comes from a failure to master the conventions of his craft. The Nashville group laid themselves open to criticism as amateurs in disciplines not their own. However, they did not pretend to be other than amateurs in economics and history and theology. But being trained in the word, they might write more convincingly than specialists. They might and did relate economics through history to the immediate situation, as specialists cannot do. This led them at last to see that the local malaise was not endemic but epidemic. The local scene was brought not only into new relationship with this country or Europe but within that of Christian civilization. This perhaps can be called the Southern attitude as distinct from that of the rest of American letters.

And this brings us to Mr. Campbell's notes on religion and to the inadequacy, as Mr. Tate saw it, of a trading religion for an agrarian, or for any society. Any society, and historically this is true of the South, which depends upon the weather and the seasons knows what the scientist and materialist only learned after the cracking of the atom cracked the hemisphere: that nature and matter is mysterious and irreducible to man's absolute control. This attitude is the source of religious feeling. The South was a religious people, but Protestantism with its insistence on works instead of grace gave them a dogma contradictory to their experience of nature. When they were defeated in the Civil War, they took it that God had shown by this work that they were in error. They prepared to accept this rebuke and in good faith received

God's correction by accepting the ways of the victor. They prepared in humility to rebuild a ruined economy and rejoin the Union. It was the Reconstruction which reintroduced doubt and forced the South into the isolation of its poverty and confusion. Loyalties were divided, towards the past and a belief in the authority of works. I don't think the Bourbons were altogether aware of the role they were playing, that of being Caesar's tax-gatherers, just as now, at this distance I feel sympathy for the muddlement of the New South men. The extreme fundamentalism was a poverty of the religious mind, only equal to the poverty of the economic situation. The New South men were spokesmen for the revelation of works. The influx of wealth, the increase of industry after the first world war seemed to establish the new way, which was a final statement in economics of what was implicit in protestant theology. It was not until writers questioned the material things as the end, rather than the means, that the renaissance came into being. It was no accident that the articulate school found itself in Tennessee. Tennessee and Kentucky are border states. They suffered less from Reconstruction, and their economy had always been diversified. They never depended upon one money crop, and so were freer of exploitation. Their institutions therefore continued after civil strife to function less impaired. Hence the conflict came to Tennessee after the world war with greater force than after the Civil War. It's curious that of the four men Mrs. Cowan and Mr. Rubin accept as the leaders two came from Tennessee and two from Kentucky. They questioned with great clarity a belief in works alone. I think I would agree with Mr. Campbell that Mr. Ransom's too great dependence upon reason, that is the conscious raising of a principle to a myth, may be heresy. But I don't think it is so simple as his quotation of Maritain makes it seem.

Fundamentalism betrayed belief by the poverty of its dogma and ritual. *God Without Thunder* was a recognition of the impotency of belief so functioning and the need to restore authority to the godhead. Myths don't come from principles. Myth-making must be allowed to God working through the imaginations of men. Historically, the guardians of the mysteries have always been

initiated into a myth already functioning. When myths are changed they are modified to account for a change in belief. This change appearing as a revision of ritual and dogma was considered by those in charge as dangerous matters, and to be kept private. The moment the altar was abandoned to the pulpit, the mysteries became public, which is to say they ceased to be mysterious. So the only voice Mr. Ransom could use was a public voice. Homiletics had failed. Reason was the one competent voice left him. But God has moved in stranger ways his mystery to perform.

Yeats wrote of a trembling of the veil of the temple. The Twentieth Century finds this veil in tatters, at least in protestant societies. It is in such a society that the writers of the Renascence find themselves. Each stumbles in his particular quarter of the darkness. Mr. Warren's last novel, *World Enough and Time*, implies not an As If matrix but the protestant total depravity of man. Mr. Faulkner's *A Fable* denies the supernatural. Man endures in that Morality piece not because he is immortal; he is immortal because he endures. What he has to endure in the dualism of good and evil. Hope that he will end it and establish paradise on earth is the overt action of the book, so that the fable ends not upon the saviors but the John the Baptists, the Quartermaster General and the Runner, the one weeping for lost hope, the other defiantly renewing faith in it, out of a mouth and body which forms an image of the dualism that will deny it. Yet because of this hope, at some far distant future, man will prevail. Just how and under what conditions we are not told.

But it does tell us how the artist will prevail, by using a scene he knows, which will forever remain as the restraining form of what is universal in experience. Faulkner shows us by abandoning these conventions. He has tried to act in the very old role of priest-poet. This is impossible now. The poet-priest can only so sing when the mystery is private. Faulkner is more successful as are all poets in the poetic convention of his craft. But he did not try, as Arnold did, to make poetry take the place of religion. His experiment has shown us afresh what is available this day and time, that we can only explore the meaning of reality within the limitations of our proper metiers. An artist's function is to make;

a scientist's to know; a priest's to reveal. In a world where the scientist can no longer control what he knows, nor a priest reveal, it seems only the artist keeps to his limitations, which he does because it is the only way he can give meaning to the raw matter of his subject. This practice, by showing the efficacy of any convention, may be a guide through the wilderness of our confusion. Perhaps this is what Blake meant when he said that the artist continues the work of God.

ANDREW NELSON LYTLE

oah
here
riest
n he
raw
y of
our
that

Donald Davie

YTL

A Dublin Cento

Look at these points
—Semi-brick fronts with bay
windows, excellent gardens
among a rich man's flowering lawns
Amid the rustle of his planted hills
The plan was modified
with "all convenient speed"

Semi-brick fronts with bay
windows, excellent gardens
in Landscape Road, Rathfarnham
Sarah Curran's Rathfarnham
He cometh not, she said
ever since Denis Johnston's
No to a terrible beauty.

A tawdy cheapness
shall outlast our days
Bermuda's dream done over into stone
and rigour of a Berkeley's argument
Unreal city, Gandon's
Now rustication painted on a wall
of this "Manhattan Bar"

We wed this scyon to the wildest stock?
A sixty-year-old public man
had hopes of it, pious for once
He found it brick and he left it
Semi-brick fronts with bay
a fine view over the bay
a splendid view of the mountains

Up in the mountains there you feel free
After the beauty, the hankering
the harking back. And a cheap nostalgia
shall outlast our days
He cometh not, she said
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter, nor
"the visionary gleam"

in an atmosphere charged
with recollections of a brilliant era
Hamilton Rowan amuses
his suave descendant. The Desire to Please
supplies what "the age demanded"
malice or a dying fall
either way, deflation.

The lilt of Irish laughter
Lever sustained on opium
The timbre changes
and Mangan from the Persian
has punned himself poor Patsy Malaprop
"Haf-iz half mine"
The downstage Mick

A technical conversation
heard between burly strangers
on how to set words to music
or it may have been music to words
formidable, burly
might have been artisans
a technical conversation

Out-weariers of Apollo
will discuss partition
All-Ireland conversation
in Croke Park or wherever
had best be of techniques
styles, that is, modes of feeling
or where to put caesuras.

NOTE. This poem is intended as a report on the present state of Irish culture. Apart from poems by Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Tennyson, and Shakespeare, the principal sources are Denis Johnston, *The Old Lady Says No*; Harold Nicholson, *The Desire to Please*; Hone and Rossi, *Bishop Berkerley, His Life, Writing, and Philosophy* (Illustration, p. 134); and a building-contractor's advertisement in the *Dublin Evening Mail*.

—DONALD DAVIE

Van H. Thompson, Jr.

THE HOLE

Sitting in the hole he had scraped from the frozen earth, he watched the last, dwindling arc of bloodied sun melt the peaks across the reservoir. The sun cast soft yellow reflections into the gray sky. He watched mountains slowly grow where the sun had been. He had never hated to see the last of anything so much as he hated to see the last of the sun dive finally behind the hills. There was left twilight and the nearness of night. He shivered and thought of the night and flipped his cigarette butt out onto the hard crusted snow. He watched it burn into its small grave.

Leaning back in the shallow hole, he pulled the blanket higher over his legs. He moved his legs a little to relieve a cramp, then pushed the blanket back. Through the large rips in the two pairs of pants he fingered the bandage around his left thigh. *Dirty. Should have had medical care yesterday, he thought, at least a change of dressing.* But there were no more bandages and the company's Corpsmen had died two days ago trying to stop a man's bleeding by pinching a severed artery with his fingers and crying because the man was dying and he couldn't stop it. A grenade had landed behind the Corpsman as he worked over his patient. *Christ crying! with his hands all bloody.*

He removed the clip from his M-1 because it occupied his hands and mind. He could not do anything now without consciously thinking of it. There were only four rounds in the clip. He had known without looking. He had checked the rifle a dozen times during the day while waiting for night—why did he think of something silent? Nothing came at night but the Chinese and they came with a blare of tinny bugles and treble voices yelling through the crackling of automatic weapons. *They came and went, but they always left their mark,* he thought not very bitterly. They were so good at leaving their mark that there were now thirty in the company where there had been nearly two hundred a few

days ago. Was it really only six? And on the seventh day he rested. The Chinks, too, could rest tomorrow.

He reloaded. *Getting too dark to see good.* His numbed fingers fumbled with the smooth brass. He grasped the operating rod, pulled back the bolt and released it, seating the first round in the chamber. The snap of the bolt was loud in the still air. The silence which followed seem to press hard on his ears.

There is more silence than sound in combat, and which is louder? He pushed the safety to off. The silence shattered like ice. From his right came an echo as someone else prepared for night. Metallic clickings spoke a single-syllable conversation about the crest of the hill. He looked towards his right flank where there were two men in a hole five yards away. He could not see beyond them but he knew that twenty-seven others extended in a rough circle around the crest until they ended with the two on his left. The moon would be up in a couple hours and it would be bright enough to see the entire perimeter. Bright enough for everyone to see.

He wondered what the twenty-nine others were thinking. What did it matter? Besides he was pretty sure what they were thinking, if any were still capable of thought. He rubbed his hand in small circles on the flat of the rifle stock, then on his web belt until he touched the bayonet.

He drew the bayonet from the hard fabric sheath on his left hip. Gripping the knife, he stabbed the air in front of him, then, holding it in both hands, he inspected the so-naked thing. The entire philosophy of the Corps seemed centered in the ten and one half inches of dull-painted steel. *The will to meet the enemy. What useless hours were spent in bayonet drill. I'll be dead long before I could reach anybody with this.* He slid the blade back into the sheath. The lock snapped softly.

Pushing the blanket back, he got up stiffly. The cold had penetrated his muscles, making his movements awkward. *Guess the senior man should inspect the position and check for...* The thought trailed off as another took its place. *Why?* He didn't know. *Tradition isn't it? In the books. Company Commander will inspect the position before nightfall. I'm late.*

He limped about the circle, breaking through the crusted snow from one hole to another. No one was asleep and no one spoke. All looked tiredly down the slope or across to other hills. There was a blank uncaring look in their eyes. The uncaring thing in their eyes hadn't reached their hands, he noticed. Each hand gripped a rifle and a finger curled around each trigger.

He reached the last two men, those to the left of his hole. They had the only machine gun remaining in the company along with half a belt of A.P. to feed it. One man turned his head to look at him, then silently turned back to the gun.

He walked on to his own hole and stood looking down at it. *It's funny*, he thought. *We fight with rifles, grenades, mortars, all the most modern conveniences of war, but we do it from holes. Like dawn men throwing rocks at each other, from one cave to another. Makes science look futile. I don't think it would be so bad if you didn't have to hide in a hole you dig.* A small, cold fist unfolded in his belly, sending icy fingers playing out. He realized what the hole was, while the skeleton fingers crept about his guts. He sat down on the parapet with his feet in the hole, pulled out the bayonet and hunched over looking at it. He got into the hole and laid the knife on his thigh. The fingers were searching all the secret places of his body. *O, my soul, be...* He couldn't remember what his soul was to be. Once he had not believed in souls, but he had since seen too many dead men with something gone out of them to doubt the existence of souls any longer. That something which was gone wasn't just life, either, because dead animals showed life missing. A dead animal was just a dead animal. But a dead man wasn't a man anymore, he was just dead. He didn't even look like a man. It was all clear to him now and he wished he could explain it to someone. The priest who had tried to explain it once but became lost in bumbling phrases of "Faith" and dogma, maybe he had been right after all but hadn't understood his own knowledge, calling it Faith. *Now, I wonder if I haven't maybe already lost the damn thing? Wonder if it's already gone? Christ, no. I'm not dead yet. I'm just cold. It's this stinking cold that's got me thinking about it. Your soul doesn't leave until you die and I won't die for a couple hours yet.*

The fingers had reached throughout his body. His hand picked up the bayonet. Now his eyes moved along its dull inches from the plastic grips riveted to the steeltang, past the all-important guard, and along the blade to where it was double-edged. Two inches from the beginning of the double-edge was the end. The fingers started to squeeze back into a fist. He shook himself a little, trying to throw off the blanket of cold, but felt the fingers contract in his belly, pulling with them everything they had touched. He slipped the ring of the bayonet guard around the muzzle and pushed. The lock clicked against the lug with a ring of finality. He stared at the rifle he had transformed into a primitive spear by this simple act. The fist twisted, hard. *Oh, Christ.* The moan wrenched from between suddenly chattering teeth. His jaw shook loosely and he felt saliva freeze on his chin. Numbness gripped him and he knew his bladder emptied, but he couldn't move. Mice scurried under the loose flesh of his back and shoulders. Polar things crawled in his thighs. His heart shook his ribs while ice water ran in the skin of his chest. Then he was lying with his face in the frozen dirt. *No, ohmigod. Not now, not tonight, not here.* He clenched his teeth and drew deep breaths. His mind seemed divided into two parts; one which was flooded with fear and one which said, *coward.* He huddled in the hole and tried to think. The voice stopped, but the fist in his bowels and the fear in his brain never loosened.

Hail, Mary, full of Grace. No place to run Blessed art Thou can't hide women and Blessed think quick! Dead. Play dead! I'll just lie here and pretend I'm dead. Maybe they won't even see me. No, I don't have the guts to lie still enough. And suddenly he had the answer. Surrender. I'll surrender. Prisoners get treated like hell but it's a damn sight better than being dead. I'll just lie here until they come, then show them I'm not fighting. His heart still pounded but the fist loosened a little and things went back where they belonged.

He pulled the blanket over his shoulders and wrapped it about him. Metal hit metal somewhere on his right and his head jerked in that direction. His eyes followed the rough circle of darkened

holes and men. He looked up where the black clouds were haloed with a cold white light.

They should be coming now. God, if only it were over. I didn't want to be a coward but I'm afraid. Jesus. Lots of guys surrender. They never tell you about it in boot camp or any place, but lots of them do. It's not in the manual but it's done. There's not much I can do with four rounds, hell, there's *not two hundred rounds in the company. Nobody can. . .* His teeth started to chatter again so he bit his lip.

He took the M-1 that had fallen to the floor of the hole, brushed a small clod of frozen earth from the rear sight, and laid the rifle on the parapet. He looked past it to the few pines standing hoary in the pale light.

The high, clear notes of a bugle sounded through the frost-laden air. Soprano voices screamed unintelligibly as the white slope was suddenly broken by dark, running figures. Staccato voices drowned the lesser ones while blue, green and orange tongues licked among the scattered pines. He pressed his mouth against the snow and dirt of the parapet to hold back a mounting scream. The rifle lay six inches from his dirt-streaked face. Four padded figures trotted clumsily across the snow towards him, automatic rifles firing wildly.

"Oh, God, I can't," he sobbed aloud.

The bayonet gleamed dully beneath his eyes. The blade enlarged until it filled his mind, crowding out the fear. He no longer felt the cold. He grabbed the rifle and fired rapidly four times at the heavily running figures. He heard the empty clip ping from the weapon. He slowly rose until he was standing erect. The rifle dropped into the On Guard position as he stepped forward from the hole.

Donald R. Pearce

IBSEN'S HAUNTED HOUSE

No great writing goes from one language to another without damage and loss. But it is particularly unfortunate that the dramatic work of Henrik Ibsen should have come into English *via* the fife of William Archer and the kettledrum of Shaw. That a worse translator and propagandist could have been found for Ibsen goes without saying, but is nothing to the point; we are thinking of those he did, in fact, get and of the almost certainty that they did him more harm than good: Archer by so paring down the diction of Ibsen's text that no less a connoisseur than Ford Maddox Ford could flatly declare "One raises the eyelids incredulously as if it were impossible that anything so thin, so exaggerated and so unprepared could ever, and however presented, once have moved us"; Shaw by advertising, in one of the most successful mis-campaigns in literary history, the very elements in the matter of the plays which Ibsen himself regarded as of only secondary importance (i.e. stimulants to attention), *to wit*, icon-smashing, institution-flouting, quotidien polemics—in a word, by presenting him as a kind of Fabian Thor.

Not that Shaw didn't have a point. But we would be quite fair in calling it strictly elementary—the simple truth being that Ibsen's mind was darker, heavier, his plays denser and more subtle, than G.B.S. was by nature endowed to know. Evidently Shaw sensed his own limitations. He writes, for example: "... it may be that readers who have conned Ibsen through idealist spectacles have wondered that I could so pervert the utterances of a great poet," adding in defense of his Ibsen-for-the masses reading of the plays, "No great writer uses his skill to conceal his meaning." Decoded, what these remarks mean is that anything in Ibsen too subtle or too heavy to be handled in a businesslike, no-nonsense-about-this fashion shall be treated as if it didn't exist. The pity, however, lies not in Shaw's having registered only the top layer of the

God's correction by accepting the ways of the victor. They prepared in humility to rebuild a ruined economy and rejoin the Union. It was the Reconstruction which reintroduced doubt and forced the South into the isolation of its poverty and confusion. Loyalties were divided, towards the past and a belief in the authority of works. I don't think the Bourbons were altogether aware of the rôle they were playing, that of being Caesar's tax-gatherers, just as now, at this distance I feel sympathy for the muddlement of the New South men. The extreme fundamentalism was a poverty of the religious mind, only equal to the poverty of the economic situation. The New South men were spokesmen for the revelation of works. The influx of wealth, the increase of industry after the first world war seemed to establish the new way, which was a final statement in economics of what was implicit in protestant theology. It was not until writers questioned the material things as the end, rather than the means, that the renaissance came into being. It was no accident that the articulate school found itself in Tennessee. Tennessee and Kentucky are border states. They suffered less from Reconstruction, and their economy had always been diversified. They never depended upon one money crop, and so were freer of exploitation. Their institutions therefore continued after civil strife to function less impaired. Hence the conflict came to Tennessee after the world war with greater force than after the Civil War. It's curious that of the four men Mrs. Cowan and Mr. Rubin accept as the leaders two came from Tennessee and two from Kentucky. They questioned with great clarity a belief in works alone. I think I would agree with Mr. Campbell that Mr. Ransom's too great dependence upon reason, that is the conscious raising of a principle to a myth, may be heresy. But I don't think it is so simple as his quotation of Maritain makes it seem.

Fundamentalism betrayed belief by the poverty of its dogma and ritual. *God Without Thunder* was a recognition of the impotency of belief so functioning and the need to restore authority to the godhead. Myths don't come from principles. Myth-making must be allowed to God working through the imaginations of men. Historically, the guardians of the mysteries have always been

initiated into a myth already functioning. When myths are changed they are modified to account for a change in belief. This change appearing as a revision of ritual and dogma was considered by those in charge as dangerous matters, and to be kept private. The moment the altar was abandoned to the pulpit, the mysteries became public, which is to say they ceased to be mysterious. So the only voice Mr. Ransom could use was a public voice. Homiletics had failed. Reason was the one competent voice left him. But God has moved in stranger ways his mystery to perform.

Yeats wrote of a trembling of the veil of the temple. The Twentieth Century finds this veil in tatters, at least in protestant societies. It is in such a society that the writers of the Renaissance find themselves. Each stumbles in his particular quarter of the darkness. Mr. Warren's last novel, *World Enough and Time*, implies not an As If matrix but the protestant total depravity of man. Mr. Faulkner's *A Fable* denies the supernatural. Man endures in that Morality piece not because he is immortal; he is immortal because he endures. What he has to endure in the dualism of good and evil. Hope that he will end it and establish paradise on earth is the overt action of the book, so that the fable ends not upon the saviors but the John the Baptists, the Quartermaster General and the Runner, the one weeping for lost hope, the other defiantly renewing faith in it, out of a mouth and body which forms an image of the dualism that will deny it. Yet because of this hope, at some far distant future, man will prevail. Just how and under what conditions we are not told.

But it does tell us how the artist will prevail, by using a scene he knows, which will forever remain as the restraining form of what is universal in experience. Faulkner shows us by abandoning these conventions. He has tried to act in the very old role of priest-poet. This is impossible now. The poet-priest can only so sing when the mystery is private. Faulkner is more successful as are all poets in the poetic convention of his craft. But he did not try, as Arnold did, to make poetry take the place of religion. His experiment has shown us afresh what is available this day and time, that we can only explore the meaning of reality within the limitations of our proper metiers. An artist's function is to make;

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ANDREW NELSON LYTTLE

Donald Davie

A Dublin Cento

Look at these points
—Semi-brick fronts with bay
windows, excellent gardens
among a rich man's flowering lawns
Amid the rustle of his planted hills
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After the beauty, the hankering
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The downstage Mick

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NOTE. This poem is intended as a report on the present state of Irish culture. Apart from poems by Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Tennyson, and Shakespeare, the principal sources are Denis Johnston, *The Old Lady Says No*; Harold Nicholson, *The Desire to Please*; Hone and Rossi, *Bishop Berkeley, His Life, Writing, and Philosophy* (Illustration, p. 134); and a building-contractor's advertisement in the Dublin *Evening Mail*.

—DONALD DAVIE

Van H. Thompson, Jr.

THE HOLE

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days ago. Was it really only six? And on the seventh day he rested. The Chinks, too, could rest tomorrow.

He reloaded. *Getting too dark to see good.* His numbed fingers fumbled with the smooth brass. He grasped the operating rod, pulled back the bolt and released it, seating the first round in the chamber. The snap of the bolt was loud in the still air. The silence which followed seem to press hard on his ears.

There is more silence than sound in combat, and which is louder? He pushed the safety to off. The silence shattered like ice. From his right came an echo as someone else prepared for night. Metallic clickings spoke a single-syllable conversation about the crest of the hill. He looked towards his right flank where there were two men in a hole five yards away. He could not see beyond them but he knew that twenty-seven others extended in a rough circle around the crest until they ended with the two on his left. The moon would be up in a couple hours and it would be bright enough to see the entire perimeter. Bright enough for everyone to see.

He wondered what the twenty-nine others were thinking. What did it matter? Besides he was pretty sure what they were thinking, if any were still capable of thought. He rubbed his hand in small circles on the flat of the rifle stock, then on his web belt until he touched the bayonet.

He drew the bayonet from the hard fabric sheath on his left hip. Gripping the knife, he stabbed the air in front of him, then, holding it in both hands, he inspected the so-naked thing. The entire philosophy of the Corps seemed centered in the ten and one half inches of dull-painted steel. *The will to meet the enemy. What useless hours were spent in bayonet drill. I'll be dead long before I could reach anybody with this.* He slid the blade back into the sheath. The lock snapped softly.

Pushing the blanket back, he got up stiffly. The cold had penetrated his muscles, making his movements awkward. *Guess the senior man should inspect the position and check for...* The thought trailed off as another took its place. *Why?* He didn't know. *Tradition isn't it? In the books. Company Commander will inspect the position before nightfall. I'm late.*

He limped about the circle, breaking through the crusted snow from one hole to another. No one was asleep and no one spoke. All looked tiredly down the slope or across to other hills. There was a blank uncaring look in their eyes. The uncaring thing in their eyes hadn't reached their hands, he noticed. Each hand gripped a rifle and a finger curled around each trigger.

He reached the last two men, those to the left of his hole. They had the only machine gun remaining in the company along with half a belt of A.P. to feed it. One man turned his head to look at him, then silently turned back to the gun.

He walked on to his own hole and stood looking down at it. *It's funny, he thought. We fight with rifles, grenades, mortars, all the most modern conveniences of war, but we do it from holes. Like dawn men throwing rocks at each other, from one cave to another. Makes science look futile. I don't think it would be so bad if you didn't have to hide in a hole you dig.* A small, cold fist unfolded in his belly, sending icy fingers playing out. He realized what the hole was, while the skeleton fingers crept about his guts. He sat down on the parapet with his feet in the hole, pulled out the bayonet and hunched over looking at it. He got into the hole and laid the knife on his thigh. The fingers were searching all the secret places of his body. *O, my soul, be. . .* He couldn't remember what his soul was to be. Once he had not believed in souls, but he had since seen too many dead men with something gone out of them to doubt the existence of souls any longer. That something which was gone wasn't just life, either, because dead animals showed life missing. A dead animal was just a dead animal. But a dead man wasn't a man anymore, he was just dead. He didn't even look like a man. It was all clear to him now and he wished he could explain it to someone. The priest who had tried to explain it once but became lost in bumbling phrases of "Faith" and dogma, maybe he had been right after all but hadn't understood his own knowledge, calling it Faith. *Now, I wonder if I haven't maybe already lost the damn thing? Wonder if it's already gone? Christ, no. I'm not dead yet. I'm just cold. It's this stinking cold that's got me thinking about it. Your soul doesn't leave until you die and I won't die for a couple hours yet.*

The fingers had reached throughout his body. His hand picked up the bayonet. Now his eyes moved along its dull inches from the plastic grips riveted to the steeltang, past the all-important guard, and along the blade to where it was double-edged. Two inches from the beginning of the double-edge was the end. The fingers started to squeeze back into a fist. He shook himself a little, trying to throw off the blanket of cold, but felt the fingers contract in his belly, pulling with them everything they had touched. He slipped the ring of the bayonet guard around the muzzle and pushed. The lock clicked against the lug with a ring of finality. He stared at the rifle he had transformed into a primitive spear by this simple act. The fist twisted, hard. *Oh, Christ.* The moan wrenched from between suddenly chattering teeth. His jaw shook loosely and he felt saliva freeze on his chin. Numbness gripped him and he knew his bladder emptied, but he couldn't move. Mice scurried under the loose flesh of his back and shoulders. Polar things crawled in his thighs. His heart shook his ribs while ice water ran in the skin of his chest. Then he was lying with his face in the frozen dirt. *No, ohmigod. Not now, not tonight, not here.* He clenched his teeth and drew deep breaths. His mind seemed divided into two parts; one which was flooded with fear and one which said, *coward.* He huddled in the hole and tried to think. The voice stopped, but the fist in his bowels and the fear in his brain never loosened.

Hail, Mary, full of Grace. No place to run Blessed art Thou can't hide women and Blessed think quick! Dead. Play dead! I'll just lie here and pretend I'm dead. Maybe they won't even see me. No, I don't have the guts to lie still enough. And suddenly he had the answer. *Surrender. I'll surrender. Prisoners get treated like hell but it's a damn sight better than being dead. I'll just lie here until they come, then show them I'm not fighting.* His heart still pounded but the fist loosened a little and things went back where they belonged.

He pulled the blanket over his shoulders and wrapped it about him. Metal hit metal somewhere on his right and his head jerked in that direction. His eyes followed the rough circle of darkened

holes and men. He looked up where the black clouds were haloed with a cold white light.

They should be coming now. God, if only it were over. I didn't want to be a coward but I'm afraid. Jesus. Lots of guys surrender. They never tell you about it in boot camp or any place, but lots of them do. It's not in the manual but it's done. There's not much I can do with four rounds, hell, there's *not two hundred rounds in the company. Nobody can.* . . . His teeth started to chatter again so he bit his lip.

He took the M-1 that had fallen to the floor of the hole, brushed a small clod of frozen earth from the rear sight, and laid the rifle on the parapet. He looked past it to the few pines standing hoary in the pale light.

The high, clear notes of a bugle sounded through the frost-laden air. Soprano voices screamed unintelligibly as the white slope was suddenly broken by dark, running figures. Staccato voices drowned the lesser ones while blue, green and orange tongues licked among the scattered pines. He pressed his mouth against the snow and dirt of the parapet to hold back a mounting scream. The rifle lay six inches from his dirt-streaked face. Four padded figures trotted clumsily across the snow towards him, automatic rifles firing wildly.

"Oh, God, I can't," he sobbed aloud.

The bayonet gleamed dully beneath his eyes. The blade enlarged until it filled his mind, crowding out the fear. He no longer felt the cold. He grabbed the rifle and fired rapidly four times at the heavily running figures. He heard the empty clip ping from the weapon. He slowly rose until he was standing erect. The rifle dropped into the On Guard position as he stepped forward from the hole.

Donald R. Pearce

IBSEN'S HAUNTED HOUSE

No great writing goes from one language to another without damage and loss. But it is particularly unfortunate that the dramatic work of Henrik Ibsen should have come into English *via* the life of William Archer and the kettledrum of Shaw. That a worse translator and propagandist could have been found for Ibsen goes without saying, but is nothing to the point; we are thinking of those he did, in fact, get and of the almost certainty that they did him more harm than good: Archer by so paring down the diction of Ibsen's text that no less a connoisseur than Ford Maddox Ford could flatly declare "One raises the eyelids incredulously as if it were impossible that anything so thin, so exaggerated and so unprepared could ever, and however presented, once have moved us"; Shaw by advertising, in one of the most successful mis-campaigns in literary history, the very elements in the matter of the plays which Ibsen himself regarded as of only secondary importance (i.e. stimulants to attention), *to wit*, icon-smashing, institution-flouting, quotidien polemics—in a word, by presenting him as a kind of Fabian Thor.

Not that Shaw didn't have a point. But we would be quite fair in calling it strictly elementary—the simple truth being that Ibsen's mind was darker, heavier, his plays denser and more subtle, than G.B.S. was by nature endowed to know. Evidently Shaw sensed his own limitations. He writes, for example: "... it may be that readers who have conned Ibsen through idealist spectacles have wondered that I could so pervert the utterances of a great poet," adding in defense of his Ibsen-for-the masses reading of the plays, "No great writer uses his skill to conceal his meaning." Decoded, what these remarks mean is that anything in Ibsen too subtle or too heavy to be handled in a businesslike, no-nonsense-about-this fashion shall be treated as if it didn't exist. The pity, however, lies not in Shaw's having registered only the top layer of the

Norwegian's mind (in the English circumstances of the Nineties, the championing of Ibsen as a sort of Voltairean roughneck was possibly even a shrewd strategy), but in the fact that this "social content," "social problem" Ibsen became a filling station for a whole fleet of very busy problem-dramatists ranging in time and in quality from Shaw and Galsworthy to George S. Kaufman and Clifford Odets—to the immense popular regeneration of English-speaking theatre but the near eclipse of the Norwegian maser—and in the fact that Shaw's Ibsen became and has remained the Ur-Ibsen of the text books. Doubts as to the adequacy of *that* Ibsen could not be more easily aroused than by placing beside the entire *Quintessence* such a remark of Ibsen's as the following in which, describing the philosophic artistry of Greek drama, he perfectly renders that of his own: "... eyes that look inward and yet through and far beyond the outward object they are fixed on." For "outward object" read "bourgeoise marriage," "Victorian morality," or most of the other Shavian polemics assigned Ibsen in *Quintessence*.

The question we are raising is this: what is the real range of Ibsen's intellectual vision in the plays? To what ultimate themes and issues does he point, "through and far beyond the outward objects on which his eyes are fixed?" After half a century of Ibsen commentary the question sounds impertinent. But it is not. Even conceding M. C. Bradbrook's fine *Ibsen the Norwegian*, and Hugh Kenner's brilliant "Joyce and Ibsen's Naturalism,"¹ the quintessence of Ibsen is still to be found in a neglected undergraduate essay written in 1901 by James Joyce on *When We Dead Awaken*:

Ibsen's plays do not depend for their interest on the action, or on the incidents. Even the characters, faultlessly drawn though they be, are not the first thing in his plays. But the naked drama—either the perception of a great truth, or the opening up of a great question, or a great conflict which is almost independent of the conflicting actors, and has been and is of far-reaching importance—this is what primarily rivets our attention....

These are the most pregnant sentences that have been written on

¹*The Sewanee Review*, Winter, 1951.

Ibsen. The fact that they were not made the *point d'appui* of Ibsen criticism in English can, in the sequel, only be considered a major misfortune for modern American and British drama. What we may call the Shavian stereotype prevailed instead, with known results; and that stereotype is so opaque, so well located, so studiously held in place, that to see around it into Ibsen himself has proved next to impossible. To suppose, for instance, that Ibsen may have seen the central action of *An Enemy of the People* with other than Shaw's rather Dickensian eyes (i.e. as a melodrama of virtue victimized) simply doesn't come natural to people. It will be best, therefore, to begin at the edges of our subject, with the general cast of Ibsen's mind, and work on in to the plays. His correspondence provides us with the starting point.

"Dear friend," he wrote to George Brandes, when the latter's avant garde views on literature had cost him a university post, "the Liberals are Freedom's worst enemies. Freedom of thought and spirit thrive best under absolutism." Nothing could be more tempting than to apply this remark to a work like *An Enemy of the People*. By its light the play could cease to be a sentimental political melodrama—the liberal-minded, high-principled Dr. Stockman at the mercy of the treacherous, brutish mob—and would take on a pervasive ground-irony of error against error within error which no performance I have ever seen has even faintly reflected (and no criticism either; witness even Eric Bentley's discussion of the play in his recent *In Search of Theatre*, or Arthur Miller's preface to *An Adaptation of An Enemy of the People*). Caught in Ibsen's unblinking ironic gaze, Dr. Stockman gradually reveals himself a typical nineteenth century "great man," complete with paranoid and messianic traits: he wants, for instance, to start a school with *twelve students* for the inculcation and propagation of his ideals.

Perhaps that would be to hang too much on a single remark; perhaps by "liberal" Ibsen meant only the genteel parlour variety, or only the chattering bohemian sort. Consider the following, then, also to Brandes, on liberalism of the order of John Stuart Mill's (whose *Utilitarianism* Brandes had just translated and Ibsen duly read): "... I must honestly confess that I cannot in the least conceive of any advancement or any future in the Stuart Mill direc-

tion. I cannot understand your taking the trouble to translate this work, the sage-like philistinism of which suggests Seneca. . . ." Essentially what this statement amounts to is a comprehensive and flat dismissal of all philosophies of the tidy community, social engineering (Mill's term), I.B.M. Morality, Welfare Politics: in a word, and not stretching things in the least, Fabianism. One could, in fact, build a sound *a priori* case as to the complete unshavianism of Ibsen on the implications of these few remarks on Mill.

Our primary concern, however, is with more central issues—what Ibsen thought about human history, human nature, human destiny and the presence and operation of such themes within his dramas. The *Letters* are useful here again. One finds his thoughts running habitually on massive, dim questions like the difference between the ancient and the modern worlds, the intuition of humanity's having suffered some irreplaceable loss in its passage from the former to the latter, the sense of a deep historic wound inflicted upon the race long ago, the compulsive European reach for self-identity, and so forth. Varieties of modern defeat and disfigurement, specific or general, interested him primarily in the dense Schopenhauerean context of this "vision" (call it) of Western Man. Thus, of contemporary Norwegian life:

There is no more connection between the Norwegians of today and those of the great days of old, than there is between the Greek pirates of modern times and those ancients who had courage and faith and strength of will and therefore the gods also, on their side.

Loss of courage, faith, strength of will, and therefore loss of the gods: in a precise sense, here is the "Quintessence of Ibsenism," and the axis of his alignment with names like Joyce, Yeats, Lawrence, Melville, and Nietzsche, rather than that host of golden mushrooms known as the Ibsenite "social-problem-dramatists." He knew, too, where to date the trouble from historically; that is the significance, on these terms, of his years of work on *Emperor and Galilean*, after finishing which he wrote to Ludwig Daal: "The play deals with a struggle between two irreconcilable powers in the life of the world—a struggle which will always repeat itself; and because of this universality, I call the book *A World Drama*." All his

plays were conceived against this obsessive dialectical backdrop, or some variation of it. It is the main source from which his heavy stream of ironies takes its rise. In 1872 he declared to Brandes:

There are actually moments when the whole history of the world appears to me like one great shipwreck, and the only important thing seems to be to save one's self. From special reforms I expect nothing. The whole race is on the wrong track; that is the trouble. Or is there really anything tenable in the present situation—with its unattainable ideals, etc.? The whole succession of human generations remind me of a young shoemaker who has forsaken his last and gone on the stage. We have made a fiasco both in the heroic and the lover roles. The only parts in which we have shown a little talent, are the naively comic; but with our more highly developed self-consciousness we shall no longer be fitted even for that. I do not believe that things are better in other countries than in our own; the masses, both at home and abroad, are without understanding of higher things.

The above extract is a depth x-ray of Ibsenism. On its dark negative lie bone-structures that take on flesh in play after play. We cannot here run through the whole of Ibsen to show this; but a good deal may be accomplished by examining two of the best-known of the plays: *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler*.

Ibsen himself vaults us over the purely academic question of whether or not thoughts about universal shipwreck were on his mind as he worked at these plays. In "Notes, Scenarios and Drafts of the Modern Plays" we find *Ghosts*, for instance, gestated as follows:

The play is to be like a picture of life. Belief undermined. But it does not do to say so. . . . Everything is ghosts. . . . The keynote is to be: the prolific growth of our intellectual life, in literature, art, etc.—and in contrast to this: the whole of mankind gone astray. . . . The fault lies in that all mankind has failed. If a man claims to live and develop in a human way, it is megalomania.

The keynote of *Ghosts*, then, is a split, the size of a crevasse, in the historic mold of Western civilization, between what we are and what we ought to have been—not merely between what we profess and what we do, the Shavian formula for this play. The tragic

hero of *Ghosts*, seen with Ibsen's eyes ("through and far beyond the outward object they are fixed on") does not even enter the play in person: he is Captain Alving, the dissolute father, dead these twenty years. (Compare the almost identical situation in *Hedda Gabler*). Oswald and Mrs. Alving are little more than passive victims in the wake of the Captain's personal tragedy. Dazed by a calamity that occurred far back in their past and is now almost beyond their power to contemplate objectively, though they brood on little else, all the characters seem to us to wander or stagger through the play like somnambulists—corporeal Ghosts—clutching at the broken bannister rails of memory in the ruined house, slapping closets shut, peering into haunted rooms, manoeuvring what is left of their dwindled lives toward the final scream, the nightmare end of the dream that began when the defeated captain was put to sleep with the drug prepared for those who "claim to live and develop in a human way." In D. H. Lawrence's words, "post-mortem effects," from start to finish; or as Ibsen says: "everything is ghosts."²

Dear quick, whose conscious buried deep
The grim old grouser has been salving,
Permit one spectre more to peep.
I am the ghost of Captain Alving

Silenced and smothered by my past
Like the lewd knight in dirty linen
I struggle forth to swell the cast
and air a long-suppressed opinion.

* * *

The shack's ablaze. That canting scamp,
The carpenter, has dished the parson.
Now had they kept their powder damp
Like me there would have been no arson.

Nay, more, were I not all I was,
Weak, wanton, waster out and out,

²In 1934 James Joyce, inspired, according to Herbert Gorman, "by the remembrance of a performance he had recently seen in Paris of an Ibsen play," wrote an Epilogue to *Ghosts* some stanzas of which are thoroughly apposite here, particularly as they relate to our view of Captain Alving, Pastor Manders and the European household:

There would have been no world's applause
And damn all to write home about.

(Gorman, *James Joyce*, 226-27)

The play is sometimes held to be melodrama, a tragedy without catharsis. It is not. On Ibsen's terms we could describe it as one sustained moral revelation. If there ever was a play which left one feeling " 'Tis well an old age is out, and time to begin a new" this is it. The "devil's rain"; the burning, uninsured welfare-center; the sun which the insane Oswald wants to play with but cannot have; the mocking glacial peaks which reflect it (which *do* play with it—only when turned to ice can you sport seriously with platonic ideals); the little box of lethal pills balanced against the brightening lie in the room; Mrs. Alving's schizophrenic scream in her impossible situation: these are the icons of a perfectly contemporary social and cultural dementia which it is unnecessary to detail here. Ibsen is, in fact, dealing in this play with the end-result of a contradictory philosophy of civilization universal in the west and co-terminous with European history. The contradiction which he sees is that at the outset humanity, or more guardedly the Western family, managed to combine in its special formula of death incompatible dynamisms: benignity and cruelty, compassion and sadism, sweetness and ice, spirit and matter, Absolute and temporal—a combination once described by A. O. Lovejoy as "the most extraordinary triumph of self-contradiction in human thought"—, in general, arranged things so that every virtue and every ideal should be linked to its "ragged shadow." In the etiology of our Western crisis Ibsen would never have dated the trouble from the fifteenth century—from Descartes, or Montaigne and the collapse of the Mediaeval synthesis. The mistake in the western enterprise was, for him, *ab initio*, from the moment the ancient Greeks elected idealistic rationalism as the mental path for the West; in some moods he seems to date it from the onset of dualizing Christianity, but in any case the "mistake" has been pervasive and continuous.. "The complete human being," he wrote in a note on *Ghosts*, "is no longer a product of nature, he is an artificial product like corn . . . if a man claims to live and develop in a human way it is megalomania. All mankind and especially the

Christian part of it, suffers from megalomania." Such, to return to the play, is the inherited mental disease from which every character in *Ghosts*—not just Oswald, who only symbolized it most concretely—ultimately suffers. Ibsen could, perhaps, have found a better symbol than congenital syphilis; it seems almost too apt. Indeed, the artistic trouble with Ibsen is just that he is too specific, too unmistakable, too allegorical, not far enough along towards a subtler symbolism; in short, a little pat.

Ghosts, then, presents world moral and social shipwreck. Who survives? Regina—the parentless, dissonant female—who, having seen too much duplicity too close, and reeking contempt for all men, will go on her lonely, bitter way to a dubious and probably nasty future; and Engstrand—the maimed, petty swindler, crude father of Judge Brack—who has slowly but surely learned how to ring cold cash out of the moral contradictions of a civilization he couldn't otherwise care less about. As to Pastor Manders, the respecter of "leading opinion," we may easily picture him and his inheritance: alone, wrapped in his prudent strait jacket, in a commercial hotel room—brief case stacked with petty legal and financial documents, letters of introduction and notes for sermons, head stuffed with paralyzing moral slogans—figuring a fresh angle for the advancement of his worldly career; a febrile, top-drawer Engstrand. Mrs. Alving? She is to sit alone with her brief case of exhausting memories and regrets in the doomed house; the only hope for her being that if she hangs on long enough she may acquire some of the bitter wisdom of Tiresias. Apparently the whole self-deluding attempt to whiten the sepulchre (mocked in the burning of the Orphanage) just won't work: "From special reforms," wrote Ibsen, "I expect nothing," because "lacking faith, courage and will they have not the gods on their side."

If we have emphasized here the dark side of Ibsen, it has been to differentiate him from the social-problem-ironist of popular conception; but it would be misleading to picture him as merely another *basso-profundo* prophet of doom. Thoughts about human error and tragedy only roused him to activity. No promptings of romantic nihilism, however disguised, could persuade him to settle accounts and "go down with the ship" (nor, in current Ameri-

canese, "adjust to the group," that particular deliquescence being left to Pastor Manders). On the contrary: "Energetic productivity is a capital specific," he wrote to the despondent Brandes.

What I chiefly desire for you is a genuine, full-blooded egoism, which shall force you for a time to regard what concerns yourself as the only thing of any consequence, and everything else as nonexistent. I have never really had any very firm belief in solidarity; in fact, I have only accepted it as a kind of traditional dogma. If one has the courage to throw it overboard altogether, it is possible that one would be rid of the ballast which weighs down one's personality most heavily. . . . But do not think that I do not understand you perfectly.

And again, "That man is right who has allied himself most closely with the future." Needless to say, no character in *Ghosts* gives utterance to these fare-forwardisms; yet so cunning is Ibsen's hand, so steady the satiric light he sheds on the whole trope, that the play incarnates them as surely as if he had written them out in a set speech.

Ghosts, as we have seen, celebrates a profound culture-conflict inherent in the very formula of the West, and transmitted like mental disease. What of *Hedda Gabler*? M. C. Bradbrook finds at the centre of the play "not a problem put a personality"; Teseman, Lovborg and Brack "are equally unpleasant and unimportant, and the two women's parts are only 'feeds' . . . the whole play pivots upon Hedda but she herself is neither 'placed' nor judged. She is a study in a vacuum. . . . Fate is cleverer than Hedda at playing tricks and she herself is outplayed at her own game." Probably what closed Miss Bradbrook's eyes to the core meaning of this play was Ibsen's remark (which she notes) in a letter to Count Moritz Prozoi: "It was not really my desire to deal in this play with so-called problems." We know what Ibsen meant by "so-called problems." But Ibsen's next sentence will be our warrant for going further. "What I principally wanted to do was to depict human beings, human emotions, and human destinies, upon a groundwork of certain of the social conditions and principles of the present day." Not "so-called problems," then, but deep human situations.

Hedda Gabler is Ibsen's psychological study par excellence. Its central concern is the disunified personality of our time; in particular, the unsexed and vocationless "emancipated" woman.

The overt themes are three: I. The splitting apart of man and woman under a regimen which insists on treating them as one and the same creature. II. Sexual embitterment and deprivation. III. The contempt of modern woman for modern man. Behind these immediate themes Ibsen unfolds his indictment of a society in which (to put in it a sentence) the facts are: that men tend to become either like Lovborg, Bohemians, or like Teseman anemic specialists, or like Judge Brack, sharpers; and women to become either frustrated neurotics whose sex has turned to hate, like Hedda, or ideal-packing comrades whose sex has turned into a sore of platonic team-spirit, like Thea Elvested. This is a domestic tragedy, another "doomed house" drama, of astonishing lucidity and scope.

As with *Ghosts*, the point of attack on the implied story in Hedda is very late. The overriding perspective on the characters and action everywhere postulates a decisive falling away from some presumed and vanished human norm that can be roughly described as "heroic" (or in modern terms, "fully integrated.") The play dramatizes aspects of latter-day distintegration and asks into the causes.

Teseman presents, almost in caricature, the tragedy of the encapsuled specialist. He does petty research on his honeymoon. Without other motive than an incapacity to face the present or the actual, he labors to fill notebooks and filing cases with useless information about a frivolous historical topic. He is the type of modern specialist, who having lost all hope and technique in personal relations, and hence all vital edge in living, *develops stupidity* in himself as to the demands of "real life" in order to appear to be above them. His peculiar intellectual old-maidism (learned no doubt from his Aunt Julia who raised him) is therefore teleological: if one wants to be exempted from the ordinary responsibilities of adult life there is no better ticket than a scholarly reputation. What Ibsen notes about the type is that it is *endowed*, that it actually pays not to develop beyond the age of eight or nine years, when one does activities like stamp collecting, or in Teseman's

specific case collects data on no less a matter than "Domestic Industries of Brabant in the Middle Ages." Anyone who supposes, however, that the type is limited to universities knows not the business world.

Lovborg displays another form of Ibsen's male tragedy ("the shoemaker who has abandoned his last and gone on the stage"); in this case, the imaginatively gifted man who, though a failure of will similar to Teseman's but different in its effects, sinks into Bohemianism—the quicksand of the disillusioned romantic intellectual—in childish protest against a society of materialist values and tough real problems. On its higher levels this disaster is titled Byronism: its hallmark is intellectual despair; on its lower levels, it is Bouvardism: intellectual frivolity. Romantic history is strewn with such wrecks. As unwilling as Tesmanites to bring their superior intelligence to bear upon the world of practical reality, guilt-driven sensation-hunters, they panoramize, explain all history in a generalization and sweep forward to wrap up the next thousand years or so as well. Such auto-intoxication is often euphemized, in the ingratiating phrase of Shelley, "The desire of the moth for the star." What Ibsen notes about the type, however, is that it flinches readily, goes on debauches, and commits suicide early and in strange and ugly ways. (Shaw learned much from Ibsen. But an instance-for-all of what he did not learn is provided by the famous enigmatic ending of "Candida." *She takes his [Marchbanks'] face in her hands; and as he divines her intention and bends his knee, she kisses his forehead. Then he flies out into the night. She turns to Morell, holding out her arms to him: "Ah, James! They embrace. But they do not know the secret in the poet's heart.* One suspects that Shaw didn't know either. This final flourish of Marchbanks, on top of what we are supposed to think he has learned in the course of the play, is clearly intended to suggest that he is bound for some dazzling if unspecified mission in life that will land him firmly on his two feet on the other side of some notable victory. Actually, Marchbanks is rushing off to catch the night-train to Lovborgtown. It would be foolish to invest much hope or faith in his mission. Shaw leaves us confused because he was sentimental about Bohemia really. Joyce was more realistic and

brought Stephen Daedalus to Icarian ruin in *Ulysses*, precisely because that is where Marchbankism, even in such as Stephen, inevitably leads.)

With the Tesemans and the Lovborgs deflected from serious involvement in the world-as-it-is, plenty of elbow room is left for the third man: Judge Brack. Brack is also a tragic figure. In him we see the tragedy of Western man shrunk to the form of "Sharper." This man is specifically post-Cartesian as a species; he has all the complacent air of having *arrived*, of being installed at the centre of things. He is a professional Engstrand, sophisticated and raised to another power: instead of the Sailor's Home, a Real Estate Agency, and Household Finance. Cynically adept at the technique of using others, of figuring an angle around and beyond the immediate human situation, smooth, "realistic," he represents for Ibsen *the* enemy: the "operator." What Ibsen notes about the type is that he moves into the seat of power by default, since the Tesemans are too busy arranging their filing cards, and the Lovborgs—life's kibitzers—who, because men of perception, *could* have grown into men of leadership as well, are too busy with their essentially undergraduate Shelley-roles, speculating excitedly on the future of the world over endless coffees or cocktails.

As to the women. Aunt Julia has a double function. She is needed, in part, to show us how Teseman got to be the way he is and, in part, as a grotesque image of the potential fate which Hedda was fleeing (and hence is a device for arousing corrective sympathy for Hedda. Ibsen remarks of Hedda's marriage to Teseman: "She was already between twenty-five and twenty-six. In danger of becoming an old maid.") Julia presents the colorless, quite stupid (though aggressive) conventional aunt-mother, whose special business is to destroy the male in the accepted way: simply by arresting the development of their charges, or offspring, at some point prior to adolescence (a more serious crime, in certain lights, than Hedda's incitement of Lovborg to suicide).

Thea Elvsted completes the symmetry of the characters. She is to Aunt Julia what Lovborg is to Teseman: the same thing keyed a little differently. In spite of her (dubious) scholarly interests and apparent selflessness, she reveals the same personal stupidity, ag-

gression and sexlessness a Julia. (Ibsen himself described her as "pop-eyed.") She wishes to *assist*, and to rescue, though her own life is a fiasco. She wants to serve in a useful *cause*—one suspects that it does not too much matter what cause so long as it seems socially reputable—and she sheds a faint, dry, spiritual light which, like radium, kills. Fundamentally sad and empty, she has found that busying oneself with "projects" helps to take one's mind off the emptiness; so she wishes to get on with the job. She is able to help Lovborg precisely because if there is anything a person of his spontaneous dishevelment needs it is an efficient and devoted secretary who will type on whether he lives or dies.

We come to Hedda who, as Ibsen said, "is to be regarded rather as her father's daughter than as her husband's wife." Vivid, brilliant, without adequate or valid channel for her energies—ar rather, refusing any such channel—bored, contemptuous of men (deservingly: what have they ever done for her?) she is shockingly recognizable portrait of the plight of modern woman. "It is the want of an object in life that torments her," Ibsen wrote; and in the drafts makes her say: I have no gift for anything but being bored." One hears in her voice the accents of Eliot's women in *The Wasteland*, and of Hemingway's in story after story—Hedda's ghosts, who go on living, "read, much of the night, and go south in winter," and ask in tones that pass from boredom through despair to terror, "What shall we do now? What shall we ever do?" Like Oswald before her (but worked out now in psychological terms) she preserves deep childhood indentification with the memory image of her soldier-father, musing upon his wreck, his military caste, the earlier, palmier days of balls, plumes and horsemanship ("... when we were children, staying at the archduke's") and toys obsessively and guiltily with his weapons. Sexually terrified, she forces Shelley-Lovborg out with pistols; then, twenty-six and out of funds, contemptuously marries simple-Simon for security. Half a century of "Female Emancipation" paying off beautifully—in a tragic reversal of erotic relations that makes a drunkard out of Lovborg, a valet out of Teseman, and a suicide out of Hedda.

"To do without men by being like men." That, we are frequently reminded, is the regular panacea, or strategy, adopted by

sexually cold or terrified women, and it is a formula which has been applied to the personality of Hedda. But it is not the answer to the Problem of Hedda's misery. It is not what Ibsen is saying. The answer is both more simple and more profound than Freud, and it is not to be found in Kinsey's *Inside Story*; yet Ibsen hands it to us on a platter. It is seen simply and finally in the fact that the men who surround her, however you look at them, are incomplete men; half-men; splinter-men. They can do nothing for her, the fundamental equation of life having been broken down by (in Wyndham Lewis's phrase) "an instinctive capitulation of the will on the part of the ruling male sex."

In his notes of *A Doll's House*, one of Ibsen's entries reads:

There are two kinds of spiritual law, two kinds of conscience, one in man and another, altogether different, in woman. They do not understand each other; but in practical life the woman is judged by man's law, as though she were not a woman but a man.

The result, he suggests, is that women have begun to take on characteristics of men and nothing but "despair, conflict and destruction" can follow. This seems to cover the situation in *Hedda* about as neatly as might be desired. But just in case we have misunderstood him, Ibsen has fixed on the main wall, right above the love-seat, the portrait of the dead general in full military regalia, from which special eminence he stares down upon the whole tragic scene below like a ghost-figure, aloof and percipient. (That *Hedda* is not "period" but continuingly modern would be easy to demonstrate by reference to a dozen recent American novels; compare, for example, William Styron's *Lie Down in Darkness*, 1952, which deals though in far greater detail than *Hedda*, with the identical tragedy in the story of Peyton Loftis.)

What Ibsen sets before our eyes in this play is a picture of sexual, social, moral and intellectual relationships possessing about as much cohesion as a split jig-saw puzzle. The degree to which the persons involved are incapable of grasping the reality of the situation they are faced with (have, in fact, long been faced with) is dramatically crucial. Ibsen drives it home with the last line: "People don't *do* such things." (It can't happen here.) I think it notable

that the line is given to Judge Brack: he censors Hedda in the name, precisely, of an order, standard, or *ethos* which he, as a type, has had the biggest hand in undoing. The cliché tone of the line is the play's final triumph; in taking the words right out of the mouths of three quarters of the persons in any audience in Christendom, Ibsen entangles up with a flip of his wrist in the meshes of his central irony—"You! Hypocrite lecteur! Mon semblable, mon frere."

Don Geiger

A Peculiar Bird

My body's nerves a highway system make
For lovers to park on: my hair a wood
To tingle sparks of lightning joy:
So, feasting on the world, I on me brood.

A lazy alluvial mountain, swelling, I
Am all Walt Whitman guessed—and that too dear
For talons to pass by: I'd carry me,
As Whitman he, to shriek down every ear.

Thus greedy hope, like hawk, sinks in the flesh,
That warm Vesuvius of meaty bits
Spilled like a stew by Time's swift jerk—but that
Not yet. I'm young, rare pot for beak that fits.

I plead, "Why can't a hawk be wise as owls?
Read Plato: be ideal, and fly away,
A pretty hawk." I say, "Read Shelley, bird."
The busy bird has nothing much to say.

But, Jesus, did I mention time? O look.
Re-cast that "swift jerk" image: no fish-wife
With a pot too hot to handle, greedy Time
Tops, like an eagle, mountain of my life.

Nor even that, for who's seen mountains hop
When eagles took the air? Re-cast again:
This precious pair is neither hawk nor eagle;
I see their naked heads, and my red stain.

O this is a rare scene: as if I fear
That villian Time will find some way to shirk,
Heroic me aids Time, assures the play.
Time and the ego, vultures at their work.

Beauty like mine must entertain someone:
So if some higher bird than earth's sees us,
Time and ourselves at feast on us, perhaps
He'll pluck us all! another joke, sweet Jesus.

But if this gizzard-plucking is the last,
Hedonists take the world for a good sign;
So let my rivals toast their loathing selves
Convivial both, splashed in my cheap wine.

Charles Tomlinson

The Mediterranean

I

In this country of grapes
Where the architecture
Plays musical interludes, flays
The emotions with the barest statement
Or, confusing the issue and the beholder;
Bewilders with an excessive formality,
There is also the sea.

II

The sea

Whether it is "wrinkled" and "crawls"
Or pounds, plunders, rounding
On itself in thunderous showers, a
Broken, bellowing foam canopy
Rock-riven and driven wild
By its own formless griefs—the sea
Carries, midway, its burning stripe of light.

III

This country of grapes
Is a country, also, of trains, planes and gasworks.
"Tramways and palace" rankles. It is an idea
Neither the guide book nor the imagination
Tolerates. The guide book half lies
Of "twenty minutes in a comfortable bus"
Of "rows of cypresses, an
Uninterrupted series of matchless sights."
The imagination cannot lie. It bites brick;
Says: "This is steel—I will taste steel."

Bred on a lie, I am merely
Guide books, advertisements, politics."

The sea laps by the railroad tracks.
To have admitted this also defines the sea.

"Notes on the Present State of Pound's Studies"

The surest way to emasculate a living influence in poetry is to treat him as a "subject of study." That there should be, at this time, a "Present State of Pound Studies," is attributable not alone to renewed interest in Pound's creative achievement but also to the manner in which that interest can (and has been) deflected toward an interest in something else. With a few exceptions, critics of Pound have refused to cope with the poem. They find a formula or draw up lists. Drawing up lists is a less hazardous activity, though it, too, is a substitute for thought. It demands a lustless prurience, a relentless hunt for facts, more facts, any facts. Whether these facts have any interpretative relevance is not the hunter's concern, for "after the analysis will come the evaluation."

With a poet as complex and allusive as Pound, this documentary approach is dangerous. The critic working his way through the *Cantos* in search of the primitive material untouched by the poet's hand, has no guide but his own doggedness, no standard of relevance, no way of deciding which or how much of the documentation is essential to understanding the poem. So he collects sources and references, identifies anecdotes and reconstructs Pound's reading. And we lose the poem, either in the critic's random enthusiasms or in aimless pedantry.

This is why annotation of the *Cantos* is injurious without careful attention to what Pound is *doing*. Two mimeographed periodicals, both semi-official university products, illustrate what can happen when the *Cantos* are used as an opportunity for learned exegesis. *The Analyst* is a straightforward practitioner of research techniques. *The Pound Newsletter*, which has published translations of Pound into seven languages, isn't quite sure what it is. Both are put together with the industry of a busy sub-committee of the Modern Language Association. Both are emphatically *not* concerned with poetry.

The Analyst is edited by Richard Mayo, and is staffed by faculty members and graduate students of the English Department and the School of Speech (Theater Department) at Northwestern University. Each issue contains a detailed gloss to one or more of the early *Cantos*, but, we are told: "It is beyond the scope of the guide to consider the author's intention in the *Cantos*, to comment on their structure, themes, or large meanings, or to interpret passages in terms of the work as a whole." This modesty of purpose explains why *The Analyst* is of such limited value.

If you want to know who "Fritz" is (Canto VII), or who "So Shu" was (Canto II), or what "dog-eye" (Canto V) means, *The Analyst*, with Achilles Fang's careful corrections, will inform you. There are some helpful clarifications of single lines, though much of the enlightenment is on the order of "Pergusa—a lake in Ovid." But if your interest, say, in Canto I, goes beyond the etymology of "dreory" in "bearing yet dreory arms," *The Analyst* is of no help whatsoever. Instead we are waved off to "the excellent books on Pound which have been appearing in recent years." This intellectual parsimony vitiates most of the commentary. For example, *The Analyst* doesn't say why the poem begins with a Homeric voyage, or why, in Canto I, Pound follows

a Renaissance Latin version of the *Odyssey*. It does not attempt to explain Pound's use of Aphrodite, the metamorphoses, the love-death themes or the Alessandro de Medici episode. Thus, when something obviously important turns up, like the fact that the poem begins with Anglo-Saxon rhythms, it is merely a fact to be filed along with other facts, such as the correct ascription of Provencal quotations or the fact that blue is the central color in the poem. The contributors, who resemble classical scholars annotating a dead text, are accordingly drifting into endless quibbles over detail, the latest issue (the sixth) wholly devoted to addenda. One communication will serve to define the rest. Two Brazilian readers dispute the ascription of a Portuguese quotation (Canto VII, lines 55b-56) to Camoes. "As a matter of fact, there is no such line in *The Lusiads*, which we have just re-read for this specific purpose."

The Pound Newsletter, edited by John H. Edwards, is published at the University of California, Berkeley, California. The editor identifies himself movingly with the poet. "It has been a year of continued achievement," he notes reverently, "this year of *The Women of Trachis* and *The Classic Anthology*. It has been a year of search, and in some ways a year of discovery . . ." Thus *Newsletter*, too, is part of the poetic process. A unique combination of *P.M.L.A.* and *The New Directions Annual*, it has so far run to five issues. We may expect five more. It proposes to serve as a place of information and comment, "a clearinghouse rather than a storehouse." "By the tenth issue," we learn, "the bibliographical description will have been completed, the major issues of the *Cantos* will have been examined, the necessary informational aids will have been presented, and in short, the preparations for study will have been made." But caveat lector, for the Pound of *Newsletter* is no longer Pound the Iconoclast. Nearly half the space is made up of bibliographies and assorted lists. For *Newsletter* is also, more ominously, "an experiment in the organization of study in one area of the 20th century letters." And it is an excellent example of how such "study" does, indeed, get organized, of how a vested interest (i.e., a Center for Pound studies) is formed, with committees, hierarchies and division of labor.

Newsletter has two major activities. The first is drawing up lists. The staff is "building up a central file of Pound materials." It plans to list methods of teaching Pound. It publishes a list of library holdings of Pound's work, bibliographical lists of works by and about him, a list of explications of the *Cantos*, a list of "Work in Progress" and "Work No Longer in Progress," designed to ward off squatters on claims already staked out. It announces a review article collating the English and American texts of the *Cantos*, which will presumably list the variorum readings. It lists and proposes to publish abstracts of recent graduate studies on Pound. Unabashed, *Newsletter* also publishes its own mailing list.

Even more important is *The Annotated Index to the Cantos*, compiled on the assumption that you can't tell the players without a program. The staff has scorned none of our modern conveniences. "Some 7,500 IBM cards, indexing some 11,000 items, have been prepared and are now being annotated. The *Index* will index by person, place, name and thing, as well as providing a chronology to the *Cantos* . . ." There will also be tables and maps. (The armored divisions of criticism storm the heights of Parnassus. Then the infantry moves in to mop up.) At this time, over 9,000 items have been (or are

being) "processed," including some real howlers, like "*Hope* spat from March into June" and "*Monsieur Un tel* was not found at the Jockey club." The *Index* will correct foreign quotations when necessary, and they will be translated into literal English by "experts," so that the reader can observe "from the perspective of this objectivity, the poet use of these materials." Buried under this crushing weight, "the poetic use" is unlikely to exhibit itself.

To consolidate its position, *Newsletter* is accusing other Pound critics of intellectual cowardice and refusal to explain the poem (we have just seen some of the results of *Newsletter's* contrary attitude). This polemic, toned down grudgingly after protests, is designed to discredit competition, and lead the way to its own "responsible" criticism.

It is ironic that after fifty years of making it new, Pound has been seized upon by academic conspiracy against the academy, fragmented and institutionalized into a "safe" classic. It is tragic that the editors of *The Analyst* and *Newsletter* haven't told their graduate students that their work is supposed to make sense. And it is monstrous that *Newsletter*, which owes so much to Pound, is betraying the cause of understanding it professes to serve.

GORDON RINGER

BOOK REVIEWS

DESCARTES AND THE ANIMALS (Poems, 1948-54) by *Bernard Bergonzi*. Platform. 1954.

POEMS 1947-1954 by *Weldon Kees*. Adrian Wilson. 1954.

Though Mr. Bergonzi seeks to anneal our moods with reflective exactness, and Mr. Kees to stir us with a Voice, it is fair to group their volumes together as books of light verse. We are neither intended to appaud a fine performance, like the *Go, Lovely Rose*, nor to acknowledge with excitement a thing new made, like a poem by Dr. Williams, nor to undergo a significant alteration of our emotional chemistry, as in the *Coy Mistress*, nor to learn anything new, as in *Canto 85*. We have but to recognize in the poets' reflections our own deepened, or our own sharpened. The secretion of staple minor poetry is an honorable calling, like the oyster's. But while Mr. Kees deposits his symmetrical lustres on the primary irritant itself, Mr. Bergonzi's way is to appropriate a seed-pearl which he then proceeds to encrust in layers of cellophane.

Mr. Bergonzi's decorum is almost disarming—like a well-behaved dog's, to shift zoologies—insuperably anxious to please, but equally anxious not to betray anxiety.

'A CROWD FLOWED OVER LONDON BRIDGE'

Intent, but out of step
the dense militia shuffles through the fog
towards the high citadels of trade
it daily occupies.

Dimly visible the water,
invisible the hooting ships:
a 'Symphony of Cranes' looms through,
as though for Eisenstein.

Fog drifts beneath the bridge.
The slow army still advances,
(the wheels of Commerce must keep turning;
the long bridge is a treadmill.)

The same teleological error
turns the wheel, and impels the feet.

What this has to tell us is hardly news, let alone "news that stays news." Like all inadequate poems it is pretentious, though since the pretentiousness doesn't involve a display of bad manners towards language it is likely to pass muster at a number of British critical firesides as admirable unobtrusive naturalness. Mr. Bergonzi, it is true, doesn't torture language. The idiom of the *Times Literary Supplement* suits him as it stands. He dilutes language; especially, he dilutes the substance of his titles and epigraphs. The pretentiousness of this poem inheres rather in its mere claiming of the right to exist, especially in the neighbourhood of its title. Its manners are inoffensive enough.

"The pressure under which the fusion occurs"—to borrow a terminology less often evoked than it might be—is too slight even to justify talk of fusion. One notes, with an effort of attention, "out of step," "militia," "citadels," and "occupies" within reaching distance of one another, but they don't by their mere co-presence constitute the intended military metaphor. Nor do "visible" and "invisible" achieve the intended antithesis, because one simply does not sufficiently notice either word; nor has "teleological" the quality of an urbane violation of diction; it is simply a fussy word with six syllables. Intention and execution will seldom be found to separate themselves, in a piece of verse, with such flaccid neatness; one almost fancies one can retrace the steps by which Mr. Bergonzi, stirred by some thought or quotation, undertook to contrive a poem: the selection of the pieces from his box, the process of fitting them together, the wiping off of extraneous glue.

When the creative impulse is more tortuous, an influence presides over the process of assembly: that of Mr. Empson.

Egyptians once had made an early try
and then a modern master caught the trick:
full-face and profile with a single eye.

It serves in art. But life will not permit
such angles to be readily confused.

To face a Thou you cannot look at it. . . .

That invariable chattering rhythm, as of an unbarked escapement,

serves Empson as the clockwork pulse of his mannikin wit, its effects of an atonalist's music-box:

The proper scale would pat you on the head
But Alice showed her pup Ulysses' bough
Well from behind a thistle, wise with dread; . . .

The theme of an Empson poem is that poems must be contrived, because natural utterances are languid and unsatisfactory to a mind whose norm is to be active among miscellaneous lore. Lacking Mr. Empson's air of habitual ingenuity, an imitator of his idiom will merely betray the unmodified bright idea that set him writing by exposing the refusal of any other ideas to arrive.

One poem, "Descartes and the Animals," holds one's interest and respect: it is about contrivance. The others, by and large, merely illustrate it. This isn't to weigh Mr. Bergonzi in the balances with Homer and find him wanting. It is enough to weight him with Mr. Kees, who makes no more explicit a claim on our esteem but holds our interest a good deal better. Here, as a convenient pair of specimens, is Mr. Bergonzi on "Godolphin in the Conservatory"—

Amid the ferns and dissipated Muses
this lone rococo figure sadly smokes;
one whose yellowing thought perversely chooses
to think of Life as but a vulgar hoax. . . .

and Mr. Kees delimiting "Aspects of Robinson"—

Robinson at cards in the Algonquin; a thin
Blue light comes down once more outside the blinds.
Gray men in overcoats are ghosts blown past the door.
The taxis streak the avenues with yellow, orange, and red.
This is Grand Central, Mr. Robinson. . . .

Robinson walking in the Park, admiring the elephant.
Robinson buying the *Tribune*, Robinson buying the
Times, Robinson

Saying, "Hello. Yes, this is Robinson. Sunday
At five? I'd love to. Pretty well. And you?"
Robinson alone at Longchamps, staring at the wall. . . .

Though "Aspects of Robinson" is inferior Kees, its compassion imperfectly distinguished from self-pity and its convention remin-

iscent of the slick notations of *Time* (for which Mr. Kees has worked), it points to a method solidly based on compassionate notation. In "Godolphin in the Conservatory" Mr. Bergonzi's convention, dessicated Fragonard, promising in itself, is vitiated by want of self-reliance. Godolphin isn't, within the perspectives of the convention, perceived; he is pinned into place with adjectives; the Muses are "dissipated," the figure "rococo," the thought "yellowing," the hoax "vulgar." The yellow, orange, and red of Mr. Kees' taxis don't jog the reader in this primitive way, the function *within* the presented scene, conferring a Kandinski-like pointlessness on the blur with which Robinson cannot bring himself into satisfying relation.

Mr. Kees, Robinsons and his related personae, lost people alone in crowds or hotel rooms or sanatoria, are perhaps a little familiar.

I reach for a cigarette, and my fingers
Touch a tongue depressor that I use
As a bookmark, and all I know
Is the touch of this wood in the darkness, remembering
The warmth of one bright summer half a life ago—...

pleasantly unpretentious writing, but there is nothing arresting about the feelings presented. This side of Mr. Kees' work, relaxed by an unresourceful reliance on banal key images—insistent wind, rainy days, things thrown up on the beach—escapes being unduly irritating through the poet's not pretending that clichés of emotion, though he has no perspective in which to place them, are anything more than clichés. Mr. Kees' solid virtue is that he doesn't claim to be discovering anything new about "the human condition" when in fact he is not discovering anything new. He feels what he feels, that is all he claims. This modesty, which pervades his staple poems, makes possible his best ones, where he uses the very conventionality of his melancholy as an unobtrusive solvent for ragged odds and ends assembled in comic *collages*:

THE LIVES

"History is a grave and noble pageant," Landor said.
His family life at Gherardesca proved impossible.
In 1844 his daughter gave him Pomero, a dog.

The pictures blacken in their frames, the tassels on the
bedspread

Fall. "He laughs like an ogre," Mrs. Browning said,
Who did not relish him the way her husband did.

Stuffed animals and birds, antiques of plaster gave
A tone to Boston. Santayana, who had stomach trouble
As a youth, once shook the hand

Of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Professor Norton
Lingered on. "No comfort, not a breath of love,"
Write Nietzsche, going mad. Booth Tarkington loved art.

"Well, history is a grave and noble pageant," Landor said.
"Or 'stately pageant' is perhaps the term."

On the neglected lawn, the iron dogs and deer,
Rusted among the weeds, alert, indomitable, keep watch.

This is a genuine invention; to sustain with such tranquility such
pointlessness of anecdote is to arrive, the long way around, not
at bagatelle but at poetic statement. It doesn't happen only once;
ROUND (which would need to be quoted intact), WEATHER
FOR PILGRIMS, and GUIDE TO THE SYMPHONY suffice to
show that Mr. Kees has at his disposal a way of being interesting,
by coercing out of very little with ingratiating precision exactly
what is in it.

the woodwind voices and strings
Unite in *agitato* passages that state,

Some critics believe, "Man's long revolt against the Higher
Will."

Staccato notes, *fortissimo*, engage the clarinets.
The work is dissonant, "though not excessively."

An agitated, almost angry theme ensues, in F.
(Trombones.) A struggle. (Flutes.) and then the scherzo
movement,

Lachrymose, so often thought to deal

With Western Man's religious hopes gone dim.
Drums; and the famous "Wailing of the Damned" motif
(Bassoons.) . . .

This manages, or least the whole poem manages, to be simul-
taneously a parody on musical criticism, a transcription of a scat-

tered effort of attention, and a passing comment on "the disparity between experience and order." Mr. Kees is always close to light (not flippant) verse, even when his themes are obsessive. He doesn't conceal his affinities with the New York anodyne-mongers who form their "Dachaus with telephones, Siberias with bonuses" smoothly affirm, in the weekly magazines, that we are all confused and why not admit it. He knows, however, when he is playing, and so can take his themes sufficiently for granted to play with them well. This ease of mood arises from a habitual ease of language, not, as the less successful poems testify, from some habitual Thurbesque sophistication. So he manages to be not a *New Yorker* hack but an interesting minor writer. His book is worth reading; incidentally, it is worth attention as a piece of unobtrusively excellent printing.

HUGH KENNER

THE SHAKESPEAREAN MOMENT AND ITS PLACE IN THE POETRY OF THE 17TH CENTURY by *Patrick Cruttwell*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1955.

A genuinely new theory in literary history is rare, but rarer still is that theory which, having survived one generation's hostile scrutiny, can mature into the next generation's received opinion and go on year after year providing fresh, intelligible, and illuminating images of a body of literature or a difficult age. Mr. Cruttwell modestly disclaims any intention of giving a complete image of seventeenth-century poetry; his book *The Shakespearean Moment* at most suggests a theory of its course, and even that, he says is open to all manner of criticisms. The theory itself, however, is not really new. T. S. Eliot put it forth for the first time almost a quarter of a century ago in his memorable essay on the metaphysical poets: "The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience . . . [but] a dissocation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissocation, as is natural, was aggravated by the

influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden." To this Mr. Cruttwell supplies the necessary modification (provided elsewhere by Eliot) that the dissociation which Milton and Dryden aggravated really began much earlier than the seventeenth century, and that what happened in the brief fifty years or so which he calls the Shakespearean Moment (1590-1640) was a short-lived re-emergence of medieval Christendom's integration of the physical and the spiritual, body and soul. Donne's early poetry was the first significant literary manifestation of this renewed contract with our medieval heritage, but Shakespeare's plays provided the perfect manifestation of it; for the drama was the strength of the Shakespearean Moment, its center, and its natural symbol. The nature of this heritage, as recovered and transmitted by Shakespeare and Donne, Mr. Cruttwell obligingly spells out for us in his concluding chapter. It includes such things as Anglo-catholicism, traditional theology, native popular art, sensuousness, a love of courtly splendor, a sense of unity with continental Europe, a sense of hierarchy and a sympathy with monarchy, scepticism about the possibility of human progress, and a sense of the dramatic and tragic. As the century progressed, all these gave way gradually but surely to less desirable opposites: puritanism, new science, Renaissance classicism, iconoclasm, austerity, insularity, egalitarianism, progressivism, and introspectiveness. Hence, Restoration poetry struggled for life in a soil so thin that it could not possibly grow great; and Restoration criticism formulated an image of Shakespeare that was little more than a mirror of its own impoverished sensibility. Since that time the general situation for poetry in English has not measurably improved.

Mr. Cruttwell traces the progress of this unfortunate shift in sensibility in a series of illustrations, for the most part taken from the literature of the period. The first of these is Shakespeare's sonnet sequence, which he reads as a sort of double image presenting both the complex mentality, critical, satirical, and uncertain, which gave birth to the new style, and an embryonic anticipation of the whole course of that style in Shakespeare's work. Shakespeare accordingly emerges as one who was well aware of what was happening in his time but slightly reluctant to make an

abrupt break with the conventions in which he had begun to write. Hence, for his second illustration Mr. Cruttwell turns to the more daring Donne, who in the *Satires*, *Elegies*, and *Songs and Sonets* unhesitatingly put the "new-found methods" to work. Much of what is said about Donne in this chapter has been said before; but there is also a valuable account of the emergence of the same methods in Shakespeare's plays up to about 1608, and this prepares the way for an excellent third chapter in which Donne's *Anniversaries* and Shakespeare's last plays receive attention on equal footing. One might be tempted to say that these "mature" works represent the culmination of the Shakespearean Moment, but Mr. Cruttwell has wisely observed that poetry of this kind can not properly be said to have a culmination. More than any poetry before or since, the poetry of Shakespeare and Donne possessed the power of focussing on a single point an extraordinarily wide range of experience. At its best it was not poetry brought to perfection, but poetry brought to the threshold of an infinite capacity for development, capable of absorbing and transcending subject and convention alike. It was poetry realized as power rather than as matter or form.

To illustrate the nature of the society which produced such poetry as this, Mr. Cruttwell singles out a relationship that is now extinct and all but impossible for most moderns to understand: the poet-patron relationship. The two patrons that he selects as specimens, Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland, and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, would be hard to better. Falkland with his respect for duty, his profound sense of the tragic and his "almost saintliness" stands in sharp contrast to the courtly, elegant, witty and wilful William Herbert; but the two men are alike in that they deserved to be "loved." They held in common a respect for the "great mind," wherever it might be found; for the integrity of the political, moral, and spiritual order; and for that quality symbolic of order which their age called "magnificence." Equally happy is Mr. Cruttwell's choice of a glass through which he asks us to see these men: Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*. For Clarendon not only knew Falkland and Herbert; he was of their kind. And his stately account of them, carved out in monumental

Ciceronian prose, can be read as a wistful reminder of a paradise lost. Thus the *History* fits in with Mr. Cruttwell's theory very nicely. The Restoration had its King, its patrons, and its poets; but the returned King could hardly command devotion, patrons could at best command esteem, and poets, writing in a society that had no symbols of spiritual unity (because there was really no spiritual unity to symbolize), had perforce to set for themselves limited objectives: the achievement of perfection in a set of conventions, the persuasive presentation of philosophical argument, the satirist's correction of taste and social abuse. The feeling that drama was necessary persisted, but the tragic sense was gone; and tragedy had given way to the vulgar nonsense of heroic drama. Thus the Restoration from which Clarendon looked back at the Shakespearean Moment was a point of no return.

The rest of the book (about half of it) is an attempt to explain how literary England came there. For one thing, the Puritan aversion from popular entertainment when combined with the Renaissance conception of the poet as one who employs a special diction produced a poetry "simpler in feeling, clearer in outline, explicit in moralizing, and remote from the popular in language." At the same time, rationalism and scepticism, held in check during the Elizabethan period, at last broke through the barriers at breaches which Reformation, Renaissance, and new science had joined forces to make; the result was an anomaly like Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who, though a professed follower of Donne, could champion a rational religion that implicitly denied everything Donne stood for, including the nature of his poetry. The Civil War completed the work which these forces had begun. It compelled men, and poets, to take sides, to choose between Cromwell the iconoclast and Charles the "Martyr-King," abiding symbol of an ancient Catholic pattern that had so long enabled man to hold heaven and earth together. The victory of the former was, in effect, a victory for the Renaissance, so that the concept of Hero worked out by Marlowe in *Tamburlaine* became the dramatic ideal of the Restoration, the standards of Sidney and the coterie poets became the standards of a new set of writers equally divorced from the populace, and the "classical line" which

Shakespeare had absorbed and Donne had rejected became the only respectable line in an age which had no Ben Jonson to throw a bridge between it and the line of popular taste.

On the whole, *The Shakespearean Moment* is an impressive performance. Even without granting complete validity to its central theory, one must admit that Mr. Cruttwell has illuminated a great deal in the light of that theory and that the value of the theory as illuminator has been greatly strengthened. Nevertheless, there is one serious omission in the picture of the century that he sketches. The center of the Shakespearean Moment, he says over and over, was the drama; "It became a magnet of such strength that it attracted a whole school of non-theatrical poetry into its field, and filled it with the dramatic attitude" (p. 250). This is unquestionably true, and one would like to know more about it; yet the drama, as drama, is curiously absent from this book. References to Shakespeare's plays abound, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* is dealt with (though not as an illustration of drama), and there are a few quasi-sympathetic remarks about Ben Jonson. We learn that Donne found the "dramatic attitude" in his youthful visits to the theater and transferred it to his poetry, that the Puritans were hostile to the dramatic attitude, and that poets from the Restoration onwards had no real comprehension of it. But there is little in the book to suggest that Mr. Cruttwell conceives of the "dramatic" as anything more than the tension of heightened debate. The symbolic character of the Elizabethan stage and of much of Elizabethan drama, the concept of fable and action that can be discerned in the best Elizabethan plays, and the powerful social and religious function of drama as ritual—something of all this is hinted at (see pp. 143-144) but, one suspects, barely realized. This is regrettable. To have dealt squarely with the drama of the Shakespearean Moment would have been to strengthen the thesis of this book at that point where weakness is most serious, and perhaps to provide a safeguard against some unfortunate extravagances that have crept in. For example, Marston is referred to as "the most tediously forcible-feeble of all Jacobean dramatists" (p. 22). Marston is, of course, no Shakespeare, and one is certainly not bound to like him; but to dismiss his dramatic work as noth-

ing more than a new mould for his earlier satire is to read at least *The Malcontent* with an uncommonly puritanical rigor, and to reject a valuable piece of evidence. Even more seriously wrong, it seems to me, are some of Mr. Cruttwell's generalizations about Spenser viz., that Shakespeare after 1600 has nothing at all in common with Spenser; that Spenser's poetry (like Marlowe's and Sidney's) presents only "completed units of feeling and thought, but not the shifting from one to the next" (p. 49); and that *The Faerie Queene* is to be lumped together with *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Grace Abounding*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Samson Agonistes* under the heading "Puritan creations" (p. 148), which includes "Allegory; spiritual autobiography—either direct, or allegorized, partially or totally; argument and propaganda." These are easy and currently fashionable generalizations, but I suspect they are at best half truths; at least, we shall do well to re-examine them before allowing the entire Spenser canon to lie quiet under the mound of scholarship and Victorian encomium that has been heaped upon it. Most difficult of all to take, however, is Mr. Cruttwell's description of Restoration comedy as "cynical materialism" and the "natural reverse" of heroic drama as the snigger is the natural reverse of the rant (p. 229). Here either the author has switched sides or something has gone wrong with his working definition of drama. If supporting the theory of the Shakespearean Moment requires one to embrace the Puritan hostility to theater to prove an inconvenient but perfectly healthy drama dead, the theory of the Shakespearean Moment has been pressed a bit too far.

It is perhaps fortunate that it has been so pressed. The theory that the state of society at a given moment determines absolutely what the poetry shall be is a Puritan theory and needs to be identified as such. It is no accident that John Milton was very fond of it. Mr. Cruttwell suggests that the failure of Sir Walter Scott to become another Shakespeare was due to his living in an age "flying apart." But so are most ages "flying apart," Shakespeare's most of all. And yet the Shakespearean Moment came—not so much because a "medieval heritage" rose momentarily to the surface as because a Shakespeare and a Donne and a handful of others

happened to be there to make meaningful creation out of anything that fell into their hands. The only thing likely to damn us is to abandon the faith that it can happen again.

J. A. BRYANT, JR.

AMERICAN HEROES: MYTH AND REALITY. By *Marshall W. Fishwick*. Public Affairs Press. 1954.

In *American Heroes: Myth and Reality* it is myth that prevails. Marshall W. Fishwick informs us of realities in respect to the heroes whom he discusses, but affectionately centers his attention on the myth and myth-making which have grown around them.

In studying the myth-making process, Dr. Fishwick swings a wide net. He discusses heroes of genuine stature in the largest historical sense like Washington and Lee. Where is Lincoln? Certainly we badly need Dr. Fishwick's perspicacity in charting the recent elevation of the Sage of Monticello to his present eminence beside Washington and Lincoln in the three monuments culminating the sweep of the capital Mall. And what of Franklin? A hero to be sure, yet not quite possessing the popular stature of those already mentioned. Is he an example of a star dimmed by later additions to the national firmament of heroes? Or does he pay the price of having lived out his life in the colonial period? And what of national heroes among our statesmen after the Civil War? Are there any candidates? If so, which ones? It is a tribute to the suggestiveness of Dr. Fishwick's study that it raises as many questions for further investigation as it solves, for he has certainly not attempted to exhaust his theme. *Some American Heroes* would be more precise than the sweeping promise of his title.

It is the variety of types of heroes, rather than the exhaustive study of many of the same type, which fascinates Dr. Fishwick, while the ingenuity with which he ferrets diverse areas of human experience with his exuberant combination of wit and wisdom gives constant testimony of his versatile acumen. In addition to men of the greatest historical stature, he treats lesser historical personages, whose fame tends to reside in their somehow epi-

tomizing an epoch in our national history, while simultaneously providing some particular event (fact or fable) easily dramatized in "human interest" terms. The John Smith and the Pocahontas legend is a cardinal case in point. (Are New Englanders not justified in a slight cavil at the omission of the immemorial Puritan triangle centering in Miles Standish?) Daniel Boone who "kilt a bar" and Davy Crockett who died at the Alamo do for the Transappalachian frontier what John Smith and Miles Standish did for the earlier seaboard frontier. Such men as these are inevitably more at the mercy of publicists than the major historical figures, although Dr. Fishwick repeatedly demonstrates the degree to which even most notable achievements need the gilding of popularizers before these take on a truly heroic luster.

He discusses the heroes of technology, Henry Ford and Thomas Edison, who seem to have reached their apogee of popularity in the twenties. (Dr. Fishwick would make the fiftieth anniversary in 1953 of the founding of the Ford Motor Company a peak in the founder's popularity, whereas I feel that this date roughly marks the coincidental publication of a number of historical studies reassessing Ford's position but hardly altering his diminished stature as hero in the public mind.) He treats the heroes of the Plains like Buffalo Bill. And the villains of the Plains like Billy the Kid. He does not forget the heroes of the more violent industries, Paul Bunyan for lumbering and Joe Magarac for steel-making—both, alas, the products of twentieth-century advertising agencies. Finally, he includes the more overtly synthetic heroes created by the mass media: the cowboy of movie and TV, the idols of Hollywood (certainly his excellent analysis of Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and Mickey Mouse does not exhaust the filmland pantheon), and that inverted hero, the gangster. One wonders whether the derring-do of the super-sleuth and super-space man can be sufficiently overwhelming—in conjunction with Hooper ratings and box-toys—to immortalize these newer heroes of the mass media?

It is precisely with this problem of the "emerging hero" that Dr. Fishwick draws the curtain on his cosmopolitan cast. He seems to project an optimistic picture of the new hero as bathed in the

effulgence of the wide open spaces and Turner's frontier hypothesis. But I wonder whether the Plains frontier, either in actuality or spiritually, will prove to be the fount of future heroes. Personally I rather hope not, for such a hero must emerge from a mixture of nostalgia and mass media ballyhoo. It is precisely at this point that one must weed the Washingtons from the Buffalo Bills, the Jeffersons from the Douglas Fairbanks, to recognize the existence of a hierarchy of at least three orders of heroes. There are heroes in the realms of mass consumption, of aesthetic legend, and of moral example. Certainly if our future is to be worthy of its past it must find new heroes, or elaborate the old, within the latter two realms. Unfortunately, the synthetic "hero" contrived by the advertising agency and the mass entertainment industry threatens to engulf the hero of aesthetic legend and moral example. Yet, as Dr. Fishwick demonstrates, the creation of the mass media cannot be ignored since these "heroes" win wide acclaim precisely because they do reflect qualities central to our culture. Moreover, it is perfectly possible for the ad-man's Paul Bunyan or the theatrical agent's Buffalo Bill to fire the imagination of the poet, painter, or choreographer. Whereupon the "hero" created within the realm of the mass media assumes a more august role in the realm of high culture. There is, however, a danger that this mass-to-class transformation possesses something of a playful, a coy, a cute quality. In short, the creative artist may be victimized by the basic inability of the modern world to believe its myths with the almost religious intensity of older or more primitive cultures. Ironically enough, sorties like Dr. Fishwick's devastate belief while earnestly urging that we preserve our faith. The cheapening process of popularization without basic belief completes the job.

Perhaps our age is too aware of history to permit the myth of sheer fancy to exfoliate to truly epic proportions. For this reason it may be that the hero who has proved himself in history—whose accomplishments cannot be denied—may well promise most for the future. Granted this surmise, then the picturesque hero of the sun-drenched, wind-swept prairie must give way to the man who can dramatize in a large manner the problems of modern material-

ism, technology, cynicism, inhumanity, and conformity, while simultaneously affording hope for the redemption of modern sins.

Let us pray that America can produce such heroes, for they will most merit our worship. Meanwhile, Dr. Fishwick's volume provides us with brilliant insights as to how the heroes of the future will be moulded, as were those of the past, in terms of the needs of the times in which they were created. For the hero exists not to explain himself, but to help us in explaining ourselves.

WILLIAM JORDY

THE LITERARY SITUATION. By Malcolm Cowley. Viking. 1954.

Since Mr. Cowley is perceptive and honest, his new book, however lightweight, is a document of some importance; and we owe it to ourselves, not to mention the author, to consider it carefully. Mr. Cowley cites Margaret Mead and calls his study "a social history of literature in our times." Yet, despite a disarming temperateness, a genial objectivity, I find *The Literary Situation* to be essentially tendentious. Let us give Mr. Cowley's case as fairly as possible, stressing his virtues and, like him, arguing a little.

Although the entire book is at least lively, one is likely to enjoy most the second portion, "a natural history of the American writer," though I'm not sure that it really signifies very much; it is the kind of sympathetic reporting in which you immediately recognize your friends and acquaintances, but seldom yourself. In it Mr. Cowley concerns himself with such topics as why writers write, how they get started, how they earn their livings, their working habits, their vices, and their public status. There appear to be no Kinsey-style statistics available, of course, but Mr. Cowley's account has the ring of authenticity, and will form a proper foundation for the kind of generalizations it has already begun to engender. A quotation will indicate the easy anecdotal nature of Cowley's journalism:

At two the last guest is still talking and in no condition to drive. At three the host gets his own car out of the garage and urges the guest into it, while the guest keeps mumbling, "Goo

shent'nsh olluz life." The host, who has heard the formula before, interprets it as, "I could forgive Jack Ribblesdale if he had written one good sentence in all his life. I can't believe that any complete bastard ever wrote a good sentence."

Another quotation will suggest, I trust, the general underlying drift of most of Mr. Cowley's remarks. A young man had submitted to him a manuscript of a novel, then asked if he should try to live by writing. Or ought he to play safe and take a job? "I hesitated," says Mr. Cowley, "thinking that the answer to the first question is always no, because the born writer doesn't ask it."

Like Randall Jarrell, Mr. Cowley finds that the years after the second world war constitute an era of literary criticism, and, what is worse, that the new creative writing displays a high degree of critical awareness—so much, in fact, "that the novels and poems of the new age sometimes read like themes written to illustrate the best critical principles." That is understandable; they are often written for college courses in advanced composition. There are several reasons for a situation that Mr. Cowley regards as basically unhealthy. After a war, writers, like others, are likely to feel that they have been too much involved in public emotions; they withdraw to re-establish private values, which generally results in a flurry of artistic experimentation. In this country, however, the surge of experimentalism failed to take place; the young American writers felt that their experimenting had already been done for them, by the writers of the 1920's; and, in an attempt to consolidate the new advances, the young writer has transformed himself into the young critic. Besides this mood of prudent conservatism, there are other factors. More and more young writers, lured by the deceptive promise of free time, are teaching in the universities; hence, among other things, the burst of college-centered novels. Last, there is a question of fashion. The situation may not last.

Aside from the fact that many people who should be writing poems and stories are engaged in manufacturing criticism, what has resulted from this state of affairs? Mr. Cowley concedes the virtues of the original "new" critics, and of the best men in the younger crowd; we know all about that. Those he condemns, I

should reckon, stand in time as second or third generation descendants of the "new" critics. According to Cowley, the average young critic, precariously established as an assistant professor, will spend ten pages explicating a poem without asserting that it is worth his or the reader's trouble; nor would it be safe to infer that it is. What we are getting is a brand of criticism that often is so high-powered that it represents a subtle disparagement of the creative work itself; or that distorts its subject in its own effort to be creative; a criticism, in short, that leads *away* from the novel or poem.

These are serious charges, yet I don't think many people will deny some truth in them. I am not disturbed, however, that creative writers should also be critics, provided they don't spend too much time on it. Whether criticism affects adversely their other work, as Cowley claims, would seem to be a personal matter. The excesses of contemporary criticism, one suspects, are mostly the result of the "new" critics' having gone respectable: the close reading and analysis of texts has become as acceptable a claim to academic advancement as was, formerly, scholarship. And, as Cowley suggests, it's fashionable.

As we have seen, Mr. Cowley believes that the "new" criticism has been largely responsible for a "new" poetry (about which he says next to nothing) and a "new" fiction. This fiction—perhaps an attempt at a *pure* fiction, by authors like Robie Macauley, George Lanning, Frederick Buechner, Jean Stafford, Truman Capote, Paul Bowles—seems to depress Mr. Crowley very much, though he is amusing in his description of it. Such fiction, to condense Mr. Cowley's thesis, is apt to be technique-ridden, weak on narrative, and drenched with meaningless symbolism; its withdrawal from the social world results in a poverty of texture and incident. The new fiction has *themes*, not political or social subjects: "... it is about people in some private crisis or dilemma that serves as the novelist's theme and his excuse for presenting a picture of human destinies." The new fictionists, in short, "weren't coming forward with myths and heroes—that is, with archetypical stories and characters—for the new age in which they lived." What is Mr. Cowley's solution?

... the style and structure of the novels, like the formulas of the magazine stories, are almost always traditional; some of the wine is new, but the wineskins have been used before. In order to express a new sense of life, something more is needed than new melodies in a familiar mode; there must also be new signatures and tempos. In literature there must be new rhythms of speech, new images, new characters, and new methods of telling stories.

This is probably all very well but I can't pretend to understand it, and it tempts me to accuse Mr. Cowley of a sort of reverse nostalgia. At the same time, I don't see how anyone can lump together such writers as (say) Macauley, Stafford, Bowles, or Capote, like so many eggs in a carton. Mr. Cowley is generally a very good critic, but his discussion here is simply misleading. What he calls "criticism in breadth" is not criticism at all, but a misapplied sociological probing. It seems commonplace to remark that the charts and statistics of the social scientist can tell us much of what men in groups tend to *do*, and of what they hold in common; they tell us little of what men *are*, and how they differ. In similar fashion, Mr. Cowley tells us everything about these young writers except whether their books succeed or fail as works of art. If the techniques are wrong, we need to know why: to dismiss them as "traditional" is not enough. That is the job of precise formal analysis. I wish Mr. Cowley would look again at Lanning, Macauley, Stafford and some others among the novelists whom he mentions; I especially wish he would look hard at Flannery O'Connor, whom he ignores. In the meantime, it seems reasonable to doubt that *The Literary Situation* is so glum as Mr. Cowley makes it out to be.

DANIEL CHAUCER

THE NECKLESS POEMS. By Charles Homlinson. Fantasy Press. 1955.

Reading Tomlinson's verse, a sample of which appears in this issue of *Shenandoah*, is an enjoyable excursion into the intensities and clarities of human perception. Beginning where Wallace Stevens left off in *Harmonium* (as Donald Davie suggests in a comprehensive introduction to *The Necklace*), these fifteen poems

are exercises in the act of definition of objects. The basic technique (as is the epistemic concern) is derived from Stevens: that of approaching an object from a multiplicity of angles of vision. "Six points of vantage provide us with six sunsets." The method is hardly new; it was known before Faulkner, who employed it successfully in the novel. Stevens simply adumbrated its poetic usages.

Its rationale, of course, is Kant's exclusion of noumenal awareness and his elucidation of the categories of human understanding and the forms of sensuous intuition. The twentieth century neo-Kantian physicists tell us that the mind imposes laws on nature; that even the stable Cartesian "primaries," the glory of Newtonian-Victorian science, are relative to a standpoint which the observer *pleases* to take. Thus, observation of sense data (or any data) takes place only in the limited human ways of thinking. Observation requires criteria; no facts are possible without theoretic constructions; and multiple differentiations are inevitable.

But Tomlinson says it all much better:

Facts have no eyes. One must
Surprise them, as one surprises a tree
By regarding its (shall I say?)
Facets of copiousness. . . .

The room flowers once one has introduced
Mental fibre beneath its elegance,
A rough pot or two, outweighing
The persistence of frippery
In lampshades or wallpaper.

(*Observation of Facts*)

His techniques of perception have ethical extensions:

Silencing movement,
They withdraw life.

Definition grows clear-cut, but bodiless,
Withering by a dimension.

To see thus
Is to ignore the revenge of light on shadow,
To confound both in a brittle and false union. . . .

(*Through Binoculars*)

Sea Change defines many of his processes: definition through

particularization and multiplication of incidental, emotionally charged perception; the refusal to push conclusions about experience.

To define the sea—
We change our opinions
With the changing light. . . .

The sea is uneasy marble.

The sea is green silk.

The sea is blue mud, churned
By the insistence of wind. . . .

Illustration is white wine
Floating in a saucer of ground glass
On a pedestal of cut glass:

A static instance, therefore untrue.

He tells us how poetry must be written:

We exaggerate. Proportions

Matter. It is difficult to get them right.
There must be nothing
Superfluous, nothing which is not elegant
And nothing which is if it is merely that. . . .

(The Art of Poetry)

And he writes—in unobtrusively effective quantitative meters, with a taut, chaste diction and richly allusive sense correspondences—just that way.

Pine-scent
In snow-clearness
Is not more exactly counterpoised
Than the creak of trodden snow
Against a flute.
*(Nine Variations in a Chinese Winter
Setting)*

Here, as Davis points out, is no fake, faddish chinoiserie, but a real extension of our spectrum of awareness.

Despite the sizable limitations of his technique, Tomlinson uses it masterfully and, within these limits, performs the job of

clarifying human understanding. He points our insight into "The interior of the fruit,/ The heart of the cut stone."

A quotation from Wallace Stevens supplies the title and epigraph to the book: "The necklace is a carving, not a kiss." Tomlinson's art is the engravers. His forms dispel inchoate emotionalism, "the glare of brass," and set his poems in hard, Sophoclean light. They look quite fine there.

E. M. H.

CONTRIBUTORS

RANDALL STEWART is professor of English at Brown University. He will go to Vanderbilt, his alma mater, as English Chairman next autumn.

LOUISE COWAN teaches at Texas Christian University. She is the author of an unpublished monograph on the Fugitives.

HARRY CAMPBELL is professor of English at the University of Mississippi. He is co-author (with R. E. Foster) of a book on Faulkner.

LOUIS D. RUBIN, JR., is Executive Secretary of the American Studies Association. He was co-editor (with R. D. Jacobs) of *Southern Renaissance*, and has recently published a book on Wolfe.

ANDREW NELSON LYTLE was one of the twelve contributors to *I'll Take My Stand*. His books include *The Long Night* and *Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company*. He teaches creative writing at the University of Florida.

DONALD DAVIE'S book, *Articulate Energy*, a study of syntax, will appear in England in the Fall.

VAN H. THOMPSON'S first fiction appears in this issue of *Shenandoah*. He is an ex-marine currently studying creative writing with Andrew Lytle.

DONALD PEARCE, who teaches at the University of Michigan, has appeared in *Shenandoah* previously.

DON GEIGER teaches at the University of California in Berkeley. He has appeared in many reviews and quarterlies; this marks his first appearance in *Shenandoah*.

CHARLES TOMLINSON is a British poet making his initial American appearance.

GORDON RINGER, included for the first time in *Shenandoah*, practices law in California.

HUGH KENNER, who appears often in *Shenandoah*, is planning a collection of his essays.

JOSEPH BRYANT is currently at Vanderbilt.

WILLIAM JORDY, who teaches at Yale, makes his first appearance in *Shenandoah*.

DANIEL CHAUCER will lecture at Vanderbilt this Fall on Ford Madox Ford's Art of the Novel.

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Earl N. Levitt

Next to Campus of Washington and Lee University

We wish to remind you that we are open all year round. Should you require any men's wear during the summer, write and your order will receive the best attention.



Everyone waits
to buy their
formalwear in
Lexington to be
certain it is
correct for W&L
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*...our "Ivy" model,
in black,
with natural shoulders,
flap pockets, center vent,
and plain front trousers*

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